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- If you fall, remember to get back on your feet.

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ABSTRACT

The Norwegian National curriculum *LK06* put more emphasis on reading than prior curricula. However, recent studies of reading proficiency in Norway, such as the PISA surveys and Norwegian national tests report low reading scores for learners in lower secondary school. This raises an interesting question as to why the results are low despite the increased emphasis on reading in the curriculum. This is a young field of research in Norway with few studies conducted in lower secondary school with the objective to investigate EFL learners' experiences and motivation on reading.

This thesis reports an action research project conducted at a Norwegian lower secondary school. It examines Norwegian EFL learners' experiences with reading in English and their experiences with extensive reading (ER) as an alternative or additional way of learning a foreign language. Extensive reading is normally regarded as reading a large number of books at an easy and age - appropriate level so that what is read is comprehended without the use of a dictionary. It is an implicit goal that the learners' experience the reading as an enjoyable activity.

Ten EFL learners in 9th and 10th grade participated in a four-week ER program intervention. These pupils, considered to be *reluctant readers*, were selected by their English teacher to participate in the action research project. By use of pre- and post-intervention semi-structured interviews with the pupils and an interview with the teacher, I sought to obtain a deeper understanding of the pupils' experiences of reading in English as a foreign language.

The findings show that the majority of the learners were positive toward ER as a method in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, reflecting on the importance of reading in English, all of the participants viewed reading in English as important, and that a high level of English proficiency skills would be beneficial for traveling and in job-related issues. Furthermore, the findings show that the learners believed that reading promotes writing and reading skills.

The learners reported few positive reading experiences in English prior to this study, and they did not prioritize reading the self-selected book during the ER intervention. Also, their responses indicated that they seldom read literature for enjoyment only. This may have to do with the relatively low status of books in a media-rich life for young adults in our modern society.

1. Introduction

Norwegian pupils have scored poorly in reading skills. National tests based on the Norwegian curriculum and also Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) report low scores in both reading in Norwegian and reading in English (Hellekjær, 2007; Ueland, 2013). According to the PISA results, Norwegian pupils aged 15 perform at, or just above OECD average when it comes to reading, but more poorly in accurate reading.¹ These results suggest that the current approaches to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)² in Norwegian schools are not successful. This could imply that there is a lack of effectiveness in approaches to improve pupils' reading skills.

This thesis investigates the reading experiences and reading habits of ten EFL learners in 9th and 10th grade at a lower secondary school in Norway, and their experiences with an extensive reading intervention. The starting point for this study is Krashen's (2004:37) view that extensive reading will build good literacy skills. Krashen claims that the only way to become good readers and develop linguistic knowledge is to read extensively. Extensive reading (ER) can be defined as reading beyond the textbook (Drew and Sørheim, 2009), where language learners read a lot of books at an easy and age appropriate level so that the reading is comprehended without the use of a dictionary. According to Day and Bamford (1998:5), the first definition of ER was by Palmer in 1921, where he emphasized that the learner should focus on the meaning of the text before focusing on and analyzing words. Moreover, an implicit aim in using ER as an approach in language learning is that the learners read for the purpose of enjoyment (Simensen, 1998:140).

The extensive reading intervention involved the EFL learners reading books at an easy and age appropriate level with the intention that the text would be comprehended without the use of a dictionary. The ER intervention was conducted by the author, and primarily

¹ <http://utdanningsspeilet.udir.no/en/content/chapter-4/4-4-pisa-2012/>

² English holds prominence over the other foreign languages taught in the Norwegian school. The English subject is not included in the curriculum for foreign languages, but consist of a separate curriculum. Still, English language is considered a foreign language, and is in this paper referred to as EFL. However, ESL (English as a second language) and EFL (English as a foreign language) are abbreviations related to English language learning and seem to be used interchangeably in academic publications when relating to the theory of language learning (e.g Day and Bamford, 1998; Harmer, 1991; Hellekjær, 2009; Simensen, 1998). Palmer applied the term extensive reading in foreign language pedagogy (Day and Bamford, 1998). Extensive reading is used as an approach in both foreign-and second language learning, hence the term EFL is, in this paper, used with regard to both foreign language and second language theory, practice and research.

comprised of assisting and encouraging the pupils to select books to read that were suitable to their level and interest.

An English teacher at the school selected a group of pupils from her regular English classes. She considered these pupils to be *reluctant readers*, in that they typically tended to be hesitant to read during class or for homework. The pupils were informed of the project and were given the choice to participate. The pupils who volunteered to participate were boys and girls at the age of 14 and 15 years old: five pupils from 9th grade and five pupils from 10th grade.

The data collection and analysis in this thesis are based on pre- and post semi-structured interviews with the pupils, as well as a tape-recorded semi-structured interview with their English teacher. The pupil interviews involved questions related to the pupil's reading experiences and were conducted with the pupils prior to, as well as after, the four-week reading program intervention. The pupils were first introduced to a selection of books from the graded reader series *Read me!* (Drew et al., 2009) which consists of eight easy readers at three levels of difficulty. Graded readers are books with simplified text (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:60) comprising suitable vocabulary level and simplified syntax at different levels of ability. Subsequent to reading one book from the *Read me!* series, the pupils had a selection of books at the school library to choose from: Heinemann Guided Readers, Cambridge English Readers and various easy-read books written for teenagers.

There are a number of international case studies documenting an increase in reading proficiency by implementing ER as an approach to teaching reading, e.g. Elley and Mangubhai (1983), Hafiz and Tudor (1989) and Elley (1991). Results from recent studies pertaining to *reading skills* for Norwegian EFL learners call for new approaches to improve English literacy skills.³ Studies by Drew (2009) and Charboneau (2012; 2013) are particularly relevant as their research involved introducing an alternative approach to reading instruction for Norwegian EFL learners. For example, Drew (2009) found that the use of The Early Years Literacy Program (EYLP), where the focus is on increased reading using graded readers, indicated good learning outcomes. Similarly, Hauer's (2012) research on the implementation of a six-week extensive reading program, suggests that pupils involved in an ER program gain positive experiences with reading in English.

³ http://www.fremmedspraksenteret.no/nor/fremmedspraksenteret/larings---ressurser/leseveiledning-i-engelsk/reading-in-english-_a-basic-skill/reading-as-a-basic-skill-_a-challenge&PHPSESSID=72eqognlp61a40f455qkeer9k5

It appears there are no other studies in Norway documenting an interventional research approaches with a focus on ER in an EFL classroom in lower secondary school. Hence, this study contributes to the research by exploring and identifying a group of Norwegian lower secondary school EFL learners' general reading habits and experiences with reading, along with examining the pupils' experiences of an ER intervention as an approach to learning English.

1.1 Research questions

The aim of this research was to gain insight into the general reading habits and reading experiences in English of a group of reluctant lower secondary school readers. The experience of reading, from a reader's perspective, is the key to improving curriculum, methodologies and approaches. Therefore, the EFL learners were interviewed on their literacy experiences and in addition were introduced to an alternative approach to reading. An ER program intervention was provided for the pupils with the presumption it would be experienced as an enjoyable approach in language learning. The thesis therefore addresses the following research questions:

- How did a group of Norwegian lower secondary school EFL learners describe their experiences with reading in English?
- How did the learners experience an intervention adopting key principles from ER?

Since the results from previous studies show improvements in reading skills, reading fluency and vocabulary when implementing ER as a method in second language learning (Day and Bamford, 1998; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Hashim and Balakrishnan, 2006; Krashen, 2004; Nation, 1997), it was expected that the pupils in this study would experience reading as more pleasurable if they were given the opportunity to choose which books to read, and that a positive reading experience would yield positive opinions and attitudes toward reading. The hypothesis was that the accomplishment of reading an entire book would increase the pupils' self-esteem, as well as create awareness of manageable reading materials and how they can use ER as a strategy to improve and enjoy English (Bandura, 1993).

1.2 Terminology

Some terms relevant to this study appear to be used interchangeably in previous research. Hence, there is a need to clarify how they will be understood and used in this thesis.

In this thesis, the term *weak reader* differs from a reluctant reader. A weak reader may wish to read as opposed to *reluctant readers*, who show unwillingness to read. Despite the fact that *weak reader* is a term widely used by teachers, (e.g. when teachers are referring to their pupils' level of proficiency in reading), the term has not yet received a widely accepted definition. However, similar terms for *weak reader* used in educational context are *slow reader* and *struggling reader*. Day and Bamford (1998:137) refer to the term *struggling reader*, who, compared to their classmates, are pupils that may have a poor level of proficiency in second language reading fluency and list possible reasons, such as inability to read in their first language (L1) and weak second language (L2) skills. *Reluctant readers'* reading abilities may also range widely, but this does not necessarily indicate that they are weak readers. Reluctant readers merely avoid reading if possible. However, by neglecting reading assignments, a reluctant reader may easily become a weak reader as a consequence of missing out on the curriculum. According to Elley (1984), cited in Hashim and Balakrishnan (2006:173), "(...) learners' weaknesses in the second language could be due to their lack of exposure to written material at the early stage of L2 development". This indicates that if language learners of English are not exposed to books and magazines regularly both weak readers and reluctant readers could become low proficiency learners of English.

Opinions, attitudes and motivation are intertwined notions when dealing with language learning. The terms seem to be used interchangeably in educational articles. An *opinion*, in this thesis, is how one sees things, a personal view on a matter, for example: "In my opinion, reading is boring." On the other hand, *attitude* is the predisposition to act in a particular way. Alexander and Filler's (1976) definition of attitude, cited in Mckenna et al. (1995:147), is: "Reading attitude, they suggested, is 'a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation.'"

The study of *motivation* is a vast field of research in its own right. In this thesis, motivation is seen as input, a drive or motive towards performance and achievements (McClelland, 1987), and as output for which Bandura's (1997) notion of self-efficacy holds high relevance. Mori (2002) agrees on the importance of self-efficacy and adds motivational factors such as the learner's intrinsic and extrinsic values of reading and how important the

learners think the ability to read is. According to Guthrie (2008:2), a learner who read for external reasons read less.

If a pupil finds reading to be boring (opinion), the learner may act in ways to avoid reading (attitude). This also reduces the motivation for reading in an overall manner, which is a viewpoint shared by Day and Bamford (1998:4), as they claim that “(...) students with negative attitudes toward second language reading are unlikely to be motivated to do the reading they need to do to become fluent readers”. This suggests that a negative opinion (reading is boring) on reading in English as a foreign language may in turn result in a negative attitude (unwillingness) toward reading a book, the latter being low/lack of motivation toward reading.

1.3 Thesis outline

The present thesis comprises eight chapters. This introductory chapter, Chapter 1, provides the rationale for the study. Chapter 2 “background” provides an explanation to the researcher’s reasoning and the underlying factors that contributed to the research questions in the thesis. It also gives an account of national tests and research that is held as central to this thesis, as it report low reading scores and low motivation toward reading. Chapter 3 presents a brief introduction on the importance of literacy, followed by a historical overview of the curriculum in Norway and a section on the English subject curriculum. Theoretical framework is presented in chapter 4, and comprises six sections on theoretical foundation for the thesis. It elaborates on theoretical aspects of learning in a foreign language, reading skills, first and second language development, ER as a method and research on ER, literature in an EFL classroom and a final section on motivation. The methodology employed is presented in chapter 5. Theory related to the qualitative method and the semi-structured interview, process of selecting informants, the interview process, ER intervention, and data analysis. It also contains sections on validity and reliability, and ethical considerations. Chapter 6 presents the findings of the study, which are further discussed in chapter 7. It provides a discussion of the findings, organized thematically according to the nature of the research questions. Finally, chapter 8, concludes about the findings and further points to suggested areas for future research in the area of Norwegian lower secondary learners’ opinions, attitudes and motivation toward reading in English as a foreign language.

2. Background

This chapter provides a brief explanation to the background leading to the research questions presented in this thesis. The research questions originated from my personal experience as a teacher in Norwegian lower secondary schools, where I experienced both weak pupils and reluctant readers, and school administrations that did not give sufficient support in meeting the needs of each individual pupil. Hence, it seems necessary to provide this explanation in a chapter separate from the introduction chapter.

Teaching in two different lower secondary schools for five years has provided me with insight into homework and reading assignments in various subjects, mostly the English subject. Interestingly, throughout the years of teaching I experienced several pupils who displayed reluctance toward reading in English. Despite the fact that the pupils were aware of the importance of English language skills, upcoming tests, and the pupils' lack of completed homework were reported to their parents, some pupils did not read their assignments. In general, two to three pupils in every classroom refused to read out loud. There were three to six pupils who reported not doing their reading assignment. Reasons given were: "It's boring", "I forgot my book", "I have to attend sport activities every Wednesday" and "I just don't bother". These statements demonstrate some of the challenges teachers encounter in building motivation, positive opinions and attitudes towards school, toward reading and helping the pupils become autonomous learners, especially if pupils neglect their reading assignment.

This discrepancy between the aims of the teacher and/or curricula and the pupils' reading habits, initiated a personal cognitive process as to why the pupils were not reading, and furthermore what motivates pupils to read. In addition to reluctant readers, pupils referred to as "weak learners" were also of interest. The teachers and the administration at both schools referred to some pupils as "weak learners". There seemed to be a common perception that weak learners are pupils who struggle with their reading and therefore do not read all of their assignments. A second common perception was that both reluctant readers and weak learners often tend to choose the subject *Engelsk fordypning* ("in- depth English") instead of a new foreign language, such as Spanish or French.

The reason was “concerns of having to learn another language”, as it involves learning to read using a new language structure. *Engelsk fordypning* is meant to increase English proficiency from novice to intermediate level.⁴

Although no statistics have been found to support this, it seems as if the current subject *Engelsk Fordypning*, perhaps contrary to the intentions for the subject, is chosen by pupils who are performing poorly in English reading and writing. By selecting *Engelsk fordypning*, the pupils avoid having to learn yet another language (a third language) like German or French. Consequently, if *Engelsk fordypning* is chosen by a *weak pupil* due to low proficiency in reading or low self-esteem in reading, there ought to be an alternative class where there is a focus on improving the pupil’s reading skills.

Regardless of pupils being labeled as weak or reluctant learners, the pupils are entitled to education aimed at meeting their individual needs to enhance their skills. However, I experienced that weak pupils were often ignored or left out from both the regular teaching sessions and *Engelsk fordypning*, sometimes even left to their own. A group of weak learners I previously encountered had a separate classroom that they referred to as the “Grey Zone”, which is explained in Chapter 2. Arguably, pupils who do not receive education aimed at meeting their individual needs, risk losing their motivation towards reading.

Apart from the personal experience I encountered with pupils’ reluctance toward reading, national test results indicate poor reading skills in lower secondary school. In 2013, a survey measuring writing and reading achievements in fifteen lower secondary schools was conducted in Stavanger (Ueland, 2013). The survey was rooted in the National curriculum. Despite the emphasis on reading in the Norwegian Curriculum (*LK06*), the results showed that only one 9th grade class in lower secondary school met their reading objectives. In addition, the study reported exam scores in English lower than the set national objectives. Similarly, Hellekjær (2007) refers to the low reading scores in the OECD PISA surveys, as well as the findings in his doctoral study (Hellekjær, 2005) where 30 – 40 % of the respondents reported difficulties with reading in English. Hellekjær claims that the poor language proficiency was due to counterproductive tendency in understanding new words while reading.

⁴ http://www.udir.no/kl06/REL1-01/Hele/Grunnleggende_ferdigheter/?read=1&lplang=eng

Also, an article published by Statistics Norway⁵ supports claims of a decrease in reading interest for boys and girls aged 16- 19 years of age, where a study from 2010 states that only 16% of boys and 24% of the girls reported some reading each day. Similarly, statistics and research findings in White Paper 22 (2010-2011), Motivation- Mastery- Opportunities (NMER, 2014) states: “Pupils’ motivation for learning is at its lowest in lower secondary school”. As a result, the Norwegian government is taking steps to raise learners’ motivation and learning through a strategy plan document *Strategy for Lower secondary Education in Norway*⁶. The strategy applies to the five years from the start of the 2012/2013 school years to 2016/2017.

The results shown from Hellekjær (2007), Statistics Norway and Ueland (2013), suggest that many pupils enter lower secondary school without the basic foundation of literacy skills necessary to read and write. As a possible result, pupils may fall farther and farther behind and may then be unable to meet the national competence aims in reading in English. Lesaux et al. (2008:28) stress the importance of identifying struggling readers early in their studies in order to take action in preventing them from falling behind.

It is possible that the low scores in reading are due to a decrease in reading interest among learners in lower secondary schools. If this is in fact true, it is of interest to look into reasons why there is a decrease in reading interest. Various researchers have made considerable efforts over the years in contributing knowledge to the factors that have an impact on second language learning. According to Schick et al. (1992:153) typical factors are:

- a) Student characteristics, such as home background, socioeconomic status, ethnic and cultural characteristics of the family and parent and student attitudes about school and literacy skills, (b) teacher and classroom characteristics, such as teaching experience and training, class size, peer mix and instructional approaches; and (c) school characteristics such as school resources, urban/rural location, and level of community involvement in education.

Thus, since Norwegian pupils’ low reading scores is a complex problem involving a whole range of factors embedded in the learning process, the present research examines a group of Norwegian EFL learners’ experiences toward reading. Furthermore, the pupils’ experiences with an extensive reading approach are also examined.

⁵ <http://www.ssb.no/kultur-og-fritid/artikler-og-publikasjoner/donald-duck-holder-fast-p%C3%A5-guttene>

⁶ http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Strategiplaner/F_4276_E_web.pdf

3. Teaching English in Norway

With globalization comes a greater focus on the ability to read and write in English. West is considered to be the “father” of English language learning and as early as in 1926 he pointed out that an ever-changing world creates a demand for greater English language skills, and he suggested a greater focus on increasing English skills (West, 1926).

Gray (1956:22) stated that the ability to “barely” read and write was not sufficient as literacy skills and introduced the term *functional literacy*: “A person is functionally literate when he has acquired the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enables him to engage effectively in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his culture or group”. Functional literacy has been given more attention to by educational policymakers over the decades. Holme (2004:19) addresses the term *functional literacy* and describes the term by referring to the *Basic Skills Agency in the U.K* definition of literacy: “The ability to read, write, and speak at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general (Literacy Trust, 2001)⁷.” Similarly, the Norwegian curriculum emphasizes functional literacy, as the competence goals in the curriculum are addressing the ability to read, write, numeracy and the ability to express oneself, which pertains to all subjects in Norwegian schools.⁸ For example, the English subject curriculum stresses the ability to read, write and develop oral skills in English, which are important components of being able to function in an English-speaking environment. The English subject curriculum is given special attention in this chapter as it is of utmost relevance in this study.

Followed by a brief introduction to literacy and its importance, this chapter presents a brief historical overview of the Norwegian national curricula and the *LK06* curriculum in section 3.1. and the English subject curriculum is presented in section 3.2

This study narrows its focus by analyzing how reading skills in English as a foreign language have their own challenges, and how different approaches may yield different learning outcomes.

⁷ http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/research/nlt_research/279_parental_involvement_and_literacy_achievement

⁸ <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/?lplang=eng>

3.1 Curricula Background

The Norwegian Ministry of education has throughout the years prepared and provided curricula to meet the changing needs in national as well as international society. Universal schooling for children was introduced in Norway 250 years ago. From 1889, seven years of compulsory education were provided. In 1969 the compulsory education increased to nine years and in 1997 it was extended to 10 years.

3.1.1 Historical overview

The English language subject has been taught in various ways in Norway over the years. The following is a brief historical presentation of the curricula in Norway and the role of the English subject in the respective curricula. It is based on Drew and Sørheim (2009:22-31).

In 1939, Normalplan was established and seven years of public school education became compulsory. English language teaching was optional for schools, and it was mainly the schools located in the city that chose to offer the English language subject. The main teaching method in this curriculum was the grammar-translation method. The primary focus of this method is on grammar, not on oral skills. However, it is for the most part described as one of the most used methods for teaching English as a second language.

The aim was for the learners to have basic knowledge in English. This method involves teaching pupils the rules of the language by letting them read texts and translating them into the pupils' first language. The pupils were to memorize the English vocabulary and rules of grammar. In 1959, the government advised schools to increase compulsory education from seven to nine years. In addition, there was also an increased focus on English language education as the English language aim was to increase the pupils' practical skills in English before entering lower secondary school. However, nine years of compulsory schooling, and compulsory English language in 6th and 7th grades was not enforced until 1969.

In contrast to the grammar translation method, the direct method/natural method, widely used in the 50's and 60's, focuses on using the language as a means of communication. The philosophy of this method is that by focusing on oral language right from the start, the learners will develop an understanding of how to associate words and phrases and be able to pronounce and communicate in the target language.

The main aim of this method was to be able to carry on a conversation in English, which implies that it was necessary for a teacher to have good English oral skills.

In the curriculum of 1974, named *Mønsterplan 74*, there was a breakthrough regarding the importance of English language education, and it was now to be introduced in fourth grade. In addition, the aim was not solely to focus on the practical, but to understand and speak English. In addition to the grammar translation method, the new focus introduced teachers to another method, namely *the audio-lingual approach*. Similarly to the direct method/natural method, this approach focuses on the oral language. The audio-lingual basic principle is to listen, talk and focusing on structure and correct pronunciation.

A new curriculum was enforced in 1987. The *Mønsterplan 87* included local teaching material, more emphasis on communicative activities and mistakes were allowed. In contrast to the former curriculum and the English language subject where teaching grammar was an important aspect, the English language aim in *Mønsterplan*, in addition to communication, was to use the language for different purposes. The aims of the communicative method were to solely produce language and communicate, not focusing on being correct, but communicating functional needs.

Ten years later a new curriculum *Reform 97* was introduced. The most important changes were that the school starts at the age of 6, ten years of schooling (instead of nine) and organization of the subject matter, providing a structured common curriculum with more emphasis on reading and writing. Project work was implemented as a teaching method and also a greater focus was put toward learner autonomy. English became compulsory in 1st grade, where the aims were to develop and use both oral and written English. The language was to be used as much as possible for real communication. *Reform 97* also put focus on L1 and L2 development and cultural understanding as a part of the language education.

The 2006 Knowledge Promotion Reform (*LK06*) is the current national curriculum, which replaced the former curriculum *L97*. The reform places increased focus on *basic skills*, *main subject areas* and *competence aims*.

LK06 comprises of five parts: *The Core Curriculum*, *the Quality Framework*, *Subject Curricula*, *Distribution of teaching hours per subject* and *individual assessment*. The *LK06* Quality Framework⁹ is to ensure that Norwegian learners receive an education compatible with the curriculum for primary and lower secondary education.

⁹http://www.udir.no/globalassets/upload/larerplaner/fastsatte_lareplaner_for_kunnskapsloeftet/5/prinsipper_lk06_eng.pdf

LK06 provides common learning objectives for all learners, subject content and five skills that are fundamental in all subjects. The five skills are: the ability to express oneself orally, the ability to read, numeracy, the ability to express oneself in writing, and the ability to use digital tools. The skills are defined as basic to learning in school, work and social life. The basic skills are basic in the sense that they are fundamental to learning in all subjects as well as a prerequisite for the learner to show his/her competence and qualifications.

Although Drew and Sørheim (2009:41) state the *LK06* curriculum to be much shorter and more concise than its predecessor *L97*, *LK06* continues its increased focus on reading from *L97*. Furthermore, they suggest that 10-16 year-olds learning a foreign language would benefit from a balanced approach, involving the use of all of the approaches. The changes in curricula indicate that the perception on learning and the methods used have changed significantly over the years.

3.2 The English subject curriculum

Each subject taught in Norway has its subject curriculum. According to Drew and Sørheim (2009), *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* has set guidelines that the *LK06* competence aims are based on. Furthermore, The European Council has influenced the changes in the English curriculum in Norway. The *CEFR* defines levels of language proficiency at six ascending levels and targets at measuring the learning outcomes. This allows learners in Norway, and in Europe, to define their language proficiency and use it as a key reference document for work or education purposes.

English has high status in Norway, it is the only compulsory foreign language, and it is compulsory already from first grade. English is taught in grades 1 -10, and is subject to national curriculum guidelines. The total number of hours assigned to English during the ten years of compulsory education is 527. At the end of lower secondary school the pupils can be formally tested on their English proficiency through a national final exam.

The English subject curriculum gives a description of competence aims after the second, fourth, seventh and tenth years in primary and lower secondary school, and at upper secondary school after the first year in the program for general studies (Vg1) or after the second year of vocational education program (Vg2). The competence aims follow the learner's development from grade 1 to Vg2 which reflects Krashen's (1985) *input theory* and Vygotsky's (1978) *Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)* theory on taking the learners from what they already know to what they have to learn.

Krashen's (1985) language input hypothesis is when the learner receives language 'input' that is one step beyond the learner's current stage of linguistic competence. The learner will then, according to Krashen (1985), subconsciously acquire this (new) knowledge. For example, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then acquisition takes place when the learner is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1'. Similarly, Vygotsky's ZPD "(...) is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978:33).

Reading proficiency in English as a foreign language is important and is given great attention in the English subject curriculum. The basic skill *Being able to read English* is part of the practical language competence and means being able to read and understand, to explore and reflect upon increasingly more demanding texts and thus gain insight across cultures and disciplines. *Being able to read* in the English subject means the ability to create meaning by reading different types of text. It means reading English language texts to understand, reflect on and acquire insight and knowledge across cultural borders and within specific fields of study. This further involves preparing and working with reading English texts for different reasons, and of varying lengths and complexities. The development of reading proficiency in English implies using reading strategies that are suited to the objective by reading texts that are more advanced. Furthermore, it involves reading English texts fluently and to understand, explore, discuss, learn from and to reflect upon different types of information.

The following are examples from the English curriculum's competence aims in reading in primary school after second, fourth and seventh grade and in lower secondary school. After Year 2 the aims are that the pupil shall be able to recognize some words, expressions and simple sentences in spoken and written texts. After Year 4 the pupil shall be able to read and understand the main points in texts about familiar topics. After Year 7 the pupil shall be able to read and understand texts of varying lengths and in various genres, as well as to read and talk about English language literature for children and young people from various media and genres, including prose and poetry.

Consequently, the learners entering lower secondary school (grade 8-10), should be able to read and understand books, articles, poems, as well as express themselves both written and orally in English. The aims after Year 10, which apply to the participants in this study, are that the pupil shall be able to read and understand texts of different lengths and genres, read and discuss a representative selection of literary texts from the genres poetry, short stories, novels and drama from the English-speaking world, be able to describe theme and

composition in texts and visual expressions, and be able to prepare and discuss his/her own oral or written texts inspired by literature and art.¹⁰

The competence aims are the learners' expected learning outcomes and teachers are to use the competence aims as a framework in planning and developing lesson plans. The framework gives the teachers an overview of what they are to teach. On the other hand, the curriculum does not state which books or poems to read, and the decision-making is therefore the teachers' responsibility. Drew et al. (2007:325) address the diversity in Norwegian EFL teachers' skills, as one in two of the teachers in their study had less than 10 credits in English or no formal education in English. As a consequence of the broad aims in the curriculum and the diversity in teachers' English skills, EFL learners are introduced to various teaching methods and the texts used may be based on teachers' subjective choices on what the pupils are to learn, and how they are to learn it.

To illustrate the diversity learners can experience in an English language class where the competence aim is the same, hypothetical examples of two different situations are provided: Learners in 9th grade are to learn about the United States in the course of three weeks:

Teacher 1, in lower secondary school "A", uses the school textbook *New Flight*¹¹ (Book and cd) to teach Chapter 8 - *Here and there in the USA*. The learners may be introduced to the topic by listening to the text (cd), followed by a classroom discussion on the topic. For example: Have you been in the U.S? Would you want to visit Grand Canyon or Statue of Liberty? The last task might be a vocabulary task. The two next classes will be on the same topic, but by the use of different texts (*New Flight* chapters usually consist of 3-4 texts; A, B, C and D).

Teacher 2, in lower secondary school "B", gives the learners three tasks: Firstly, search online, and write down three interesting tourist attractions/destinations in the U.S. Secondly, go to the school library and choose a book on the tourist attractions/destinations you found searching online. The book is to be read in class and at home for two weeks. Lastly, present your choice of destination in class.

¹⁰ <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/?lplang=eng>

¹¹ <http://newflight.cappelendamm.no/>

Despite two dissimilar approaches to teaching the pupils about United States, both teachers cover the following competence aims in the English Subject curriculum “explain features of history and geography in Great Britain and the USA”, “express and justify own opinions about different topics”, and “understand and use a general vocabulary related to different topics”¹². It is questionable whether or not the pupils in both schools would have achieved the same learning outcome in learning the names of tourist attractions/destinations in the U.S. The pupils from the two schools may enter university with different basic English skills as the material they are exposed to may vary from school to school. Furthermore, seeing that the amount of reading varied in the two classes, the pupils’ reading fluency may vary accordingly.

One of the main challenges for a teacher is to create a motivating environment that will stimulate reading interest and develop reading fluency. Day and Bamford (1998) discuss the importance of the teacher’s role in teaching reading by providing engaging L2 reading activities, awareness of each learner’s interests and instructional needs. They claim that the “(...) lack of systematic and principled attention to the affective dimensions of second language is unfortunate” (Day and Bamford, 1998:21). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training 2014 Report (*The Education Mirror*¹³) states that a good learning environment has a significant impact on the learners’ learning outcomes and that the teacher’s role is important in shaping a learning environment. Numerous aims are to be covered by the teachers, which can put a lot of pressure on them as the learners’ learning outcomes are measured by their score on national tests. The teachers’ pressure to cover the aims in the curriculum is addressed by Grainger (2004) and Day and Bamford (1998). Grainger (2004:2) argues that that the aims to be met “(...) can come to dominate teachers’ concerns”. Similarly, Day and Bamford (1998:22) point out the teachers’ challenges in meeting the aims in the curriculum as “They are often pushed into the background by the daily pressures of teaching (...)”

¹² <http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Kompetansemaal/Kompetansemaal-etter-10-arstrinn/?lplang=eng>

¹³ http://www.udir.no/globalassets/upload/rapporter/educationmirror/the-educationmirror_english.pdf

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents theories and methodologies that relate to language learning. Learning a foreign language and the literacy development are discussed in section 4.1, as the field of language learning draws upon theoretical frameworks from various fields. This is followed by the development of reading skills in section 4.2. The relationship between first and second language literacy is discussed in 4.3. All theories presented in this chapter are necessary components in the consideration of an implementation or intervention of an ER method, which is of relevance to this research. Prior to introducing the ER method and research on ER in section 4.5, the role of literature in the EFL classroom and language learner literature are addressed in section 4.4. The final section discusses the role of motivation in language learning.

4.1 Why learn a foreign language?

Harmer (1991) argues that there are a number of reasons why people choose to learn a second language such as English. He points out several reasons such as school curriculum, advancement, target language community, English for specific purposes, culture, interest and travel. English as a subject is a relatively recent arrival in Norwegian schools, and although the English subject has been given greater attention over the years, there is currently an even larger demand for advanced literacy skills in English. Holme (2004) suggests that this demand is a consequence of globalization and international communication. Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an international organization consisting of 34 countries working together to improve the economic and social issues around the world. Politics, education, international trade, capital and technology are to a large extent taking place within and between OECD countries where English is the *lingua franca*. This creates a necessity for Norwegians working in these sectors to possess advanced English skills.

To elaborate on the increasing need of advanced English skills it is necessary to briefly look at the changes and development of literacy. Literacy is commonly defined as being able to read and write. Despite multiple definitions of the term *literacy*, there is no common consent expressing in detail how to become literate or when a person is considered

to be literate. As a result, determining someone to be illiterate or literate is complex. How do people acquire literacy skills?

Barton (2007) states that a central question in understanding literacy is the relationship between written and spoken language. He discusses the different forms of language that occur in conversations versus literary essays and that in many literacy events the written and spoken cannot be disentangled. Edwards (2009) and Holme (2004) stress that literacy skills have become more advanced over the centuries and that advanced literacy skills are necessary in today's society. Holme (2004) states that current views on literacy involve both social and cultural aspects. This is in compliance with Edwards' (2009:54) view that literacy is an "(...) integral part of people's daily lives". According to Pellegrini and Galda (1994), there has been an increased interest in how literacy is learned, taught and how literacy affects people's lives. As a consequence, the understanding of literacy has, according to Edwards (2009), changed over the years:

At one time, being literate meant the ability to sign your name. Later definitions include reading or writing a simple sentence; describing your daily activities; self-reports of being able to read and write; and passing a written test of reading comprehension at a level comparable to an average student at Grade 4 (Edwards, 2009:54).

Linguists seem to have a common agreement that the development of literacy starts at birth, and consequently an understanding of literacy will build as the child grows. This correlates with Leaux et al.'s (2008:28) view on the importance of early literacy development: "Learning how speech is represented in writing requires the capacity to analyze spoken language into smaller units and to learn the rules for representing those units with graphemes". Naturally, an infant does not have any understanding of letters or how to construct meaning, but as the child gets older it will develop an understanding of the language. By encountering words repeatedly over the years, the child will start to recognize sounds, letters, and words and be able to construct meaning.

According to Hall (1994:22), it is also important that children are experiencing language in appropriate or natural settings, as the children then learn how to use the language in various settings. It is important for the children to be exposed to language and to be included in conversations in order to obtain the literacy skills necessary to communicate in

today's society. Furthermore, Hall (1994) argues that reading is an important process in developing a child's reading skills.

Similarly, Krashen (2004:17) stresses the importance of reading in order to increase literacy skills, as he claims that *In-school free reading* studies and *out of school self-reported free voluntary reading* studies show that an increase in reading results in better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical development. Krashen's (2004) research supports the importance of giving great attention to reading and reading experiences already from an early age. This research demonstrate that reading comprehension is an important part of learning how to express oneself in a language. This is important not only for children's day-to-day routines but also to their progress and later success both in school and work. Consequently, in Norwegian schools, learners are introduced to English as a foreign language at age six.

4.2 Developing the reading skill

It is necessary to look at what the concept *reading* entails. Defining reading is an intricate matter. Reading can be seen as a way of becoming part of a culture (Lancy, 1994; Teal, 1986). Others argue that reading should be seen as a basic human skill in modern society.¹⁴ Reading in an educational context is perhaps the most commonly studied phenomenon in the area of educational research (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Hall, 1994). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training in "Framework for basic skills" describes *reading* as the:

Means to create meaning to a text in the widest sense. Reading gives insight into people's experience, opinion and knowledge, independent of time and place. The reading of text on screen and paper is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and for active participation in life.¹⁵

This is perhaps more a description of a purpose of reading than a definition per se. Each of these perspectives on what reading is contributes to the complexity in defining what reading is. Consequently, providing a universal definition for reading runs the risk of becoming too generalized in the sense that it may become inadequate or uninteresting for those who try to understand reading in all its facets.

¹⁴ www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/education-building-blocks/literacy/

¹⁵ www.udir.no/PageFiles/66463/FRAMEWORK_FOR_BASIC_SKILLS.pdf?epslanguage=no

Day and Bamford (1998:12) define reading as a cognitive process where “(...) reading is the construction of meaning from a printed or written message”. Lesaux et al. (2008:28) state that reading is a process by means of decoding and encoding which start long before children enter school. Decoding involves translating words to sounds (reading) and encoding is using individual sounds to build and write words. In other words, word recognition, decoding, encoding and increasing vocabulary are important in the process of becoming a proficient reader. Bedtime stories, nursery rhymes and prayers contribute to reading development. However, what is being read aloud is often not exactly the same as the texts in a bedtime storybook, as parents/caregivers may use simplified reading or vocabulary accustomed to a child’s age. In addition, features such as hesitations, pauses, pitch and tone and face and body language are not in the written text.

In order for the reader to understand the meaning of the text they need to connect previous knowledge to the text and then construct the meaning (Harmer, 1991; Hedge, 2000; Krashen, 1985; Lundberg and Linnakyla, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). Hedge (2000:10) states that the more a child is exposed to language “a little above their existing understanding” the child will develop and gain an understanding of the language and its rules.

Harmer (1991:33) explains that: “(...) the input should be at a slightly higher level than the students are capable of using, but at a level that they are capable of understanding”. This seems to be a similar notion to both Krashen’s (1985) input theory and Vygotsky’s (1978) ZPD theory, involving taking the learners from what they already know to what they have to learn. Similarly, Lundberg and Linnakyla (1993:3) state that the reader is regarded as an active individual who constructs meaning by taking existing knowledge and adding new knowledge. This perspective is also in compliance with the *LK06 – Framework for basic skills*

Understand means processing and comprehending texts based on prior knowledge and expectations. This implies using different meaning-making strategies in order to understand increasingly more complex texts. This presupposes decoding strategies in which letters are contracted to words, words to sentences and sentences to texts.¹⁶

¹⁶ www.udir.no/PageFiles/66463/FRAMEWORK_FOR_BASIC_SKILLS.pdf?epslanguage=no

The *Framework for basic skills* expresses the process of decoding and comprehending a text. Advancing from simple to more complex texts seems to be a principle in most curricula, the *LK06* being no exception. This can be linked to changing views on reading competence and its development. It suggests that scholars have become increasingly aware of the importance of advanced reading skills.

Various educational approaches can be used toward reading instruction in school (Day and Bamford, 2012; Grabe, 2009; Lundberg and Linnakyla, 1993; Pellegrini and Galda, 1994). As reading is a complex activity there are various ways in teaching how to read and there are a number of different reading strategies that readers can use in order to become more proficient readers.

There are four main reading strategies: *skimming*, *scanning*, *intensive* and *extensive reading*. Skimming and scanning are both speed-reading techniques, yet very different techniques. Scanning is used to locate certain details or main ideas whereas skimming is a more superficial way of reading as it involves glancing at the text to acquire the main essence of the text (Harmer, 1991:183). Intensive reading and extensive reading are two other strategies that constitute two important reading practices. (see section 4.5.)

Traditionally, L1 reading approaches have focused on *top-down* or *bottom-up* approaches. The *top-down* approach to reading is when the learner is to understand the meaning of the text. In other words, the learner reads and looks at the content of the text and do not focus on unfamiliar words. The main idea of the *top-down* approach is for the learners to rely on their previous knowledge, or schema, and use context to decipher and understand new concepts or words (Simensen, 1998:86-87). To build on previous knowledge is in accordance with Krashen's (1985) *Input hypotheses*, which is the basic way of reading when using the *extensive reading* (ER) approach. In contrast, the *bottom-up* approach to reading is when the learner focuses on specific basic units of the language, such as words, before proceeding to comprehend more complex structures of the text, and finally to grasp the meaning. By the use of this approach, the learners gain a greater understanding of the rules of sound and symbol relationships. They move up to a word, then the phrase, and lastly the sentence. This relates to the *intensive reading* (IR) approach.

4.3 The relationship between first and second language literacy

The focus of this thesis is limited to reading experiences in English as a foreign language, hence it is necessary to look at both the process of learning a first language and a second language. Krashen's (1985) *nature of input* theory suggests that learners have two different ways of developing competence in a second language: acquisition and learning. "Acquisition is a subconscious process identical in all important ways to the process children utilize in acquiring their first language" whereas learning is "(...)a conscious process that results in knowing about language" (Krashen 1985:1).

4.3.1 Learning a first language

The process of learning a first language (L1) involves automatic word recognition, lexical access, phonological representation and prior knowledge (Lesaux et al., 2008). Drew and Sørheim (2009) state that a child acquires its L1 based on the input received from its environment. Furthermore, they discuss various theories concerning language development. They address Skinner's theory (1957) on "(...)learning 'habits' through imitation, correction and reinforcement" (Drew and Sørheim, 2009:16). In contrast, they state that Chomsky challenged Skinner's theory in 1959. Chomsky believed that as soon as a child is exposed to its native language, the *black box* starts to work and language naturally develops (Drew and Sørheim, 2009:16). The *black box* is also referred to as a "language acquisition device" (LAD). In this sense, the process of learning is a naturally innate one. According to Harmer (1991), Chomsky's LAD has influenced several teaching techniques and methodologies, but has never been "adopted" as a methodology. In contrast to Chomsky's LAD, Harmer (1991:33) discusses the distinction between acquisition and learning, referring to Krashen's language input, where he states that "Acquiring a language is more successful and longer lasting than learning".

4.3.2 L1 vs. L2 learning processes

Several researchers claim that there is a difference in the process of comprehending a first language and the process of comprehending a second language (L2). Grabe and Kaplan (1996:1) argue that there is a great difference between learning L1 and learning an additional language, as “(...)there are wide variations in learner issues within each of these major groups”. Drew and Sørheim (2004) seem to agree and point out that acquiring the L2 is more complex than learning the L1. They state that “(...)a second language is a complex matter influenced by a number of variables” (Drew and Sørheim, 2004:13), such as social and individual factors. Social factors entail how a language is regarded, the contact with or exposure to the target language, whereas individual factors are personality, intelligence, personal beliefs, motivation, self-confidence and attitude (Lightbown and Spada, 1999, cited in Drew and Sørheim, 2004:16-17).

Hedge (2000) uses the term *interlanguage*, which is the process when the child/learner passes various stages of language development. Drew (2010) states that the L1 is likely to influence a learner’s interlanguage. The term interlanguage was, according to Simensen (1998), introduced in the 1960’s. Second language learning became an increased field of interest for researchers, where the target was to explore possible reasons for the learners’ errors. The researchers came across several errors and distinctions between them were interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, developmental errors and interlanguage. Simensen (1998:91-92) defines *Interlingual transfer* as errors between two languages, in contrast intralingual transfer is when a learner add a rule to where it does not apply, or simplify a sentence by using only the language elements necessary to convey meaning. Developmental errors are basically “natural” errors as a part of the learning process. Interlanguage is when the learners use their knowledge of L1 to develop, “one after the other”, their target language. Likewise, Grabe and Kaplan (1996:25) address the importance of understanding L1 experiences in an L2 learning context as the influence from learners’ various L1 life and cultural experiences effect L2 learning.

4.3.3 Reading development in a second language

Apart from individual and social factors influencing language learning, there is also the cognitive process of learning how to read (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996:2). In order for EFL

learners to gain an understanding and use common English words and phrases, both orally and in writing, these skills have to be developed at an early age. Implications related to language transfer and interlanguage development are well known for linguists in the field of second language acquisition (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996:25). Grabe (2009) points out that there might be a quite big linguistic difference between a person's L1 and L2, since different languages vary in their phonological, orthographic, morphological, syntactic and semantic systems.

Bernhardt (2003:112) argues that the L2 process in reading is "(...)considerably different from first- language reading because of the information stored in memory". This suggests that in developing an understanding of the English language, Norwegian EFL learners use the knowledge of the Norwegian language to construct the knowledge of the English language. In addition to the process of decoding, as in learning to read in mother tongue, learning to read in English is also influenced by social and individual factors that are not present in the L1 process of learning to read. *LK06* states that developing reading skills in English also improves general reading skills. The following extract from the *LK06* curriculum shows the importance of reading proficiency in English:

To succeed in a world where English is used for international communication, it is necessary to be able to use the English language and to have knowledge of how it is used in different contexts. Thus, we need to develop a vocabulary and skills in using the systems of the English language, its phonology orthography, grammar and principles for sentence and text construction and to be able to adapt the language to different topics and communication situations. This involves being able to distinguish between oral (spoken) and textual (written) styles and formal and informal styles. Moreover, when using the language for communication we must also be able to take cultural norms and conventions into consideration.¹⁷

Pelligrini and Galda (2004:25) advocate the use of literature for pre-school children as the use of books facilitates the children's "use of symbolic transformations and reflections on the linguistic processes." The process from listening to the readers' pitch and tone, looking at pictures in a picture book, remembering the pictures, being able to put words to the pictures, pretend reading, recognizing letter and word, making meaning of a sentence, reading the

¹⁷ http://www.udir.no/Upload/larerplaner/generell_del/5/Core_Curriculum_English.pdf?epslanguage=no

book, reading more books, understanding today's society and the language rules, writing, reading more advanced books and articles, all increase the level of reading fluency and language proficiency.

4.4 The role of literature in the EFL classroom

The aim of education is to build a foundation of knowledge and expand the individual's capacity to perceive, participate, experience and to excel, as described in one of the aims in the *LK06* Core Curriculum: Education is to provide learners with awareness of the variety and scope of the world of work and bestow the knowledge and skills necessary for active participation in it.

Language learning occurs while encountering a diversity of texts, where the concept of text is used in the broadest sense of the word.¹⁸ The exposure to literature is of importance when learning a language. Hence, a variety of materials in an EFL classroom are important for the development of L2 reading proficiency. Renandya and Jacobs (2002:297) agree and stress the importance of young learners getting acquainted with various genres. Atwell (1998:96) claims that pupils who were introduced to and attended a "reading workshop" increased their scores on standardized test, and furthermore that the learners reported reading at home for pleasure. In a reading workshop the pupils are introduced to a wide selection of books, and the pupils choose their own books. Krashen (2004:1) argues that *Free voluntary reading* is one of the most powerful tools in language education as it "(...) provides a foundation so that higher levels of proficiencies may be reached." Furthermore, Krashen (2004:3) states that his research related to free reading studies, as well as studies from Collins (1980), Elley (1991), Hafiz and Tudor (1989), Pfau (1967) and Pilgreen (2000), is "(...) evidence for the power of reading". The *evidence* is that the multiple research that has been conducted on reading extensively all concludes that an increase in reading will improve reading skills, such as reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling, and grammatical development (Krashen 2004:17).

However, the reading material should be manageable. Day and Bamford (1998:16-17), state that the readers would benefit from the *i minus 1 level*, i.e below linguistic ability. This

¹⁸ http://www.udir.no/kl06/ENG1-03/Hele/Komplett_visning/?lplnag=eng&read=1

is of relevance to this thesis as the participants in this study were introduced to reading material below their reading level in English, i.e the graded readers series *Read me!* which is primarily intended for grades five to seven. In contrast to Day and Bamford's (1998) view, a learner who receives language 'input' that is one step beyond the learner's current stage of linguistic competence is at a stage 'i', i.e the acquisition takes place when the learner is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1' (Krashen, 1985). However, reading books at a level beyond the learners current stage may be a challenge to struggling readers as they may not recognize all the words, and therefore, possibly, do not enjoy reading. Hence, developing texts for language learners should take into account the learners' background knowledge e.g literacy development, language skills and level of reading proficiency.

One approach to improve reading skills using differentiating content is *extensive reading*, which is defined by Day and Bamford (2012:xiii) as "An approach to the teaching and learning of second language reading in which learners read large quantities of books and other materials that are well within their linguistic competence." The main purpose is for the learners to read in a second language and enjoy reading. In contrast, intensive reading is studying a specific part of the text; examining every line and the grammar in the text. Krashen (2004) and Grabe (2009) support extensive reading in the sense that if what is read is found to be pleasurable, it will stimulate the learners to read more books, increase their reading skills and raise their level of English proficiency. The following section describes the ER approach.

4.5 Extensive reading approach

Multiple researchers have conducted studies related to *extensive reading*. It seems to be a common view that extensive reading is a useful tool in an EFL learning context. The first to introduce the term *extensive reading* (ER) was Palmer in 1917 (Day and Bamford, 1998:5). According to Palmer the term involved "rapidly reading book after book" (Day and Bamford, 1998:5), focusing on the meaning of the text. West (1926), who developed a book series for language learners referred to it as *supplementary reading*. Elley (1983) conducted several studies where the learners were "flooded" with books to read and named it *book flood*. Krashen (2004) terms it as *free voluntary reading*. Although extensive reading has been defined in various ways throughout the years, there is not yet a simple universal definition to cover all its aspects. *Extensive reading* is not listed in dictionaries. A reason for this might be

that extensive reading is complex as it involves several elements. Nevertheless, the purpose is for the learners to improve their language skills by reading extensively.

The extensive reading approach is beneficial to all levels of proficiency as it aims to include all the learners in a mixed ability classroom by the use of differentiated material. Nation (1997:13) lists three benefits of ER. “First, reading is essentially an individual activity and therefore learners of different proficiency levels could be learning at their own level. Second, it allows learners to follow their interest in choosing what to read and thus increase their motivation for reading, which in turn may result in positive attitudes toward reading. Third, it provides the opportunity for learning to occur outside the classroom.”

Research on extensive reading (see section 4.5.3) shows that ER has multiple benefits for language learners as the use of ER is not solely to improve reading fluency, but to build knowledge of the language syntax and vocabulary. Elley (1991:408) states that when young children are exposed to well illustrated and interesting books, as in the *book flood* studies, the learners improve in both reading and listening comprehension, and that there are “gains in attitude toward reading and books”. Furthermore, the learners experience reading as an enjoyable activity. This is also in compliance with Day et al.’s (2011:10) explanation on the use of ER in a second language learning context: “ER in the EFL/ESL context is an approach to teaching reading whose goal is to get students reading in the English language and enjoying it”.

Seeing that ER consists of several notions it is necessary to explain the concept by dividing it into sub-sections on extensive reading as a contrast to intensive reading, ER materials to be used such as authentic texts and graded readers, international and national research of ER interventions, and in the final section ER as an approach to learning English as a foreign language in Norway.

4.5.1 Extensive reading versus intensive reading approach

With an intent to give a better description of what extensive reading entails, Day and Bamford (2002) provide ten basic principles of extensive reading: the reading material is easy, a variety of material on a wide range of topics is available, learners choose what they want to read, learners read as much as possible, reading speed is usually faster rather than slower, the purpose of reading is usually related to pleasure, information and general understanding,

reading is individual and silent, reading is its own reward, the teacher orients and guides the students and lastly, the teacher is a role model of a reader.

Based on the ten principles of ER, the learners choose from a wide range of topics on what, when and how to read, not solely for academic reasons, but for pleasure. The main point is that the learners read extensively. Grabe (2009:311-312) states that reading extended text is important for developing fluency in reading. Likewise, Renadya and Jacobs (2002:296) argue that one of the key features that distinguish ER from IR, is the large amount of reading material. Intensive reading does not involve flooding the learners with large quantities of reading material (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989:2).

Quite the opposite, in intensive reading (IR) the learners mainly read short texts and focus on specific lexical or syntactic parts of the text. According to Nuttall (2005:38), the aim of intensive reading is to “(...) arrive at an understanding, not only of what the text means, but of how the meaning is produced”.

The following characterizes IR. The reader reads for 100% understanding, and the reading is limited. The texts are often rather difficult, which requires word-for-word reading, and often result in the readers translating into first language. While reading, the reader focuses on grammar use and rules. Many comprehension questions, direct teaching of strategies and use of dictionaries are also characteristics of IR. However, Day et al. (2011:12) state that the use of an IR approach in teaching involves a number of problems. For example, the learners may translate short and difficult passages into their mother tongue, followed by translating word by word, which may lead to the learner not finding the reading enjoyable. Secondly, comprehension questions and language analysis leads to the learner looking for details in order to answer questions related to the text. Thirdly, it involves comprehension work and strategies, i.e. reading a text and the use of various comprehension strategies. The problem with the grammar-translation and the comprehension approaches is that they do not increase reading skills due to “Translation is different from reading – translation is not reading, and reading is not translation” (Day et al., 2011:12).

Furthermore, none of the characteristics of IR suggest that the learners are to read large quantities of meaningful and comprehensible input, as suggested by Krashen (1985). Krashen's *input hypothesis* is fundamental in ER, as the focus is on how language competency develops over time. Krashen argues that learners understand unfamiliar grammar with the help of context. In this sense, the more they read, the more they learn how to construct meaning. Grabe (2009) claims that ER will improve learners' reading skills if they read consistently and appropriately over an extended period of time. Day and Bamford (1998;

2012) supported this and argue that language acquisition will only occur if the text is neither too difficult nor too easy. Furthermore that if the material is found to be easy and manageable, it will build confidence towards reading. In addition, easy and manageable reading material will make it easier for the learners to *level up* their reading (Day and Bamford, 2012:93). This suggests that if what is read is found to be pleasurable, it may stimulate the learners to read more books, which can result in an increase in the learners' reading skills and raise their level of English proficiency.

Despite the two approaches being different in terms of how learners read and the different views on the benefits of ER and IR, they are both to be used in a classroom. Both Nuttall (2005) and Drew and Sørheim (2009) seem to agree that both approaches should be used in the classroom. Drew and Sørheim encourage a balanced approach, which is a combination of various approaches to “trigger” both the conscious and subconscious processes in learning a language.

Efficient reading requires large sight, vocabulary knowledge and an understanding of lexical features. Efficient ER programs are generally assumed to have greater potential for increasing vocabulary. Day and Bamford (1998:84) stress the importance of reading targets in order to become efficient readers as “(...) establishing reading expectations ensure that they keep moving toward their goal of becoming fluent readers”. For this reason, it is important for teachers to be up-to-date on different approaches for teaching English as a second language.

4.5.2 Extensive reading material

It is necessary to look at another aspect of ER, namely the importance in availability of books and texts. Krashen (2004:85) argues, “The most obvious step is to provide access to books”. This is consistent with Day and Bamford's (2002:2) *Top Ten Principles* where they state, “A variety of reading material on a wide range of topics must be available”. In addition, Simensen (1998:167) stresses the importance of choosing a text “(...) at the right level of language difficulty”, meaning that the books need to correlate to the learners' level of English proficiency and reading proficiency.

The appearance of a book is of great importance in a learner's choice of book. Hafiz and Tudor (1989:10) share this view with most researchers within the field of ER, and point out that “(...) an attractive cover, good quality illustrations and a clear typeface can help to attract and maintain learners' attention”. This implies that the library should not consist of old

books, nor books with “dull” covers, but contain books with enjoyable and visually attractive covers. Also, the learners should, according to Renadya and Jacobs (2002:297), be exposed to different kinds of genres, including genres that are not necessarily the learners’ preferred genre. Furthermore, they seem to share Simensen’s (1998:154) view that the printed text should suit the age and interest level of learners. Learners can select a book by its cover, the genre or the suitable level, thus displaying the complexity in choosing the “right” book to read. However, if the “right” book is chosen it is implied that the learners are encouraged to read and will enjoy reading.

As far as simplified texts are concerned, Day and Bamford (1998) name two types. First, *simplified texts* are texts from first language originals such as classics. Secondly, texts are written specifically for second language learners. Day and Bamford (1998) state there are confusions over the terms *graded readers*, *authentic readers*, and *simplified readers* and differentiate between “authenticity” and “simplification” of the reading material. They claim that there is no common agreement to the meaning “authentic” and provide the following explanation of authentic readers: “Authentic texts – however defined- are used in language teaching because they are considerate interesting, engaging, culturally enlightening, relevant, motivating and the best preparation for reading authentic text” (Day and Bamford, 1998:54).

Graded readers are used for increasing reading skills in an EFL learning context where ER is used as an approach. According to Day et al. (2011:22), they are written particularly for readers that are “likely slow readers, reluctant readers, unconfident readers, and readers with a limited competence in the target language”. However, there are various definitions of graded readers. Nuttall (2005:138) refers to graded readers as supplementary readers, whereas Simensen (1998:168) distinguishes between three types of grader readers. First, authentic readers, which are authentic texts written for native speakers. Secondly, pedagogic readers are written especially for L2 learners at definite language levels. Lastly, adapted readers, which are simplified authentic text, suited to L2 learners.

Graded readers in this study refers to books written at different levels of difficulties and consist of “headwords” (Day et al., 2011:23), which are recognizable words that the learners are expected to know. Grabe (2009:311) argues that a reader needs to know 98-99 percent of the words in a text to fully comprehend the meaning of a text. The texts in graded readers increase the words and the structure to suit a range of skill levels. This allows for progress over time, which it is anticipated, will be of interest to the learners. Furthermore, the learner gets to choose the genre out of personal interest, and reads for pleasure.

Numerous benefits using ER as an approach in EFL learning have been reported. For instance, the learners can choose a low-level book, and self-evaluate level of proficiency, which is beneficial in becoming an autonomous and efficient reader. Furthermore, ER is “An increasingly important component(...)” (Day et al, 2011:7) for learners of English in that the learners who are introduced to graded readers will gain a better understanding of the language, improving reading and writing skills become an autonomous learner and that the learners can find reading pleasurable. In addition, the learner might also become aware of which reading strategies are more or less effective.

Learners’ attitudes towards reading may become more positive by employing ER, as an approach to learning a language, and in addition lead to the learners becoming eager readers (Day and Bamford, 1998).

Graded readers are also beneficial in that teachers can categorize their library of graded readers from easy level to more advanced books. By the use of graded readers teachers may differentiate and meet individual needs by offering the original version (longer text) to stronger learners and the graded reader (adapted text) to weak learners and/or reluctant readers. Consequently, graded readers allow the learners to read longer texts and also classics in adapted versions depending on their level. Hence, graded readers, as literature, are beneficial for both the teacher and the learner.

4.5.3 Research on Extensive Reading

A number of international studies have been conducted regarding the positive effects of an ER program. Day et al. (2011:15) point to several studies conducted from 1981 to 2008, where the results are gains in reading rate, reading strategies, oral fluency, attitude, motivation, and general language proficiency. Also, Nation (2009) points to reading extensively result in an increase in language proficiency. Research conducted by Elley (1991:375), show gains in reading, listening, oral language and learners learn the target language more quickly.

Three studies by Elley (1991) are especially of relevance for this thesis. One study was conducted in 1978, where there was a comparison of audio-lingual and shared-book programs for children (8 years of age) in Niue. Results of the book program were clearly superior in improving children’s language achievement, as well as their attitudes (Elley, 1991: 382). Another study conducted by Elley in 1981, named the *The Fiji book flood program*,

(Elley, 1991:388) involved research in two classes of nine to eleven year-old learners, where the learners were introduced to a large input of high-interest, illustrated reading material. The learners showed an increase in language skills. A third a study conducted by Elley was in 1985: “Comparison of a REAP program and audio-lingual approaches” (Elley, 1991:397). More than 3000 elementary school children in Singapore participated in the study. The comparison revealed, “There is every reason to suppose that the pupils were developing very positive attitudes toward books as they raised their literacy levels in English”. Another study was conducted in the UK, where Hafiz and Tudor (1989) reported on a three-month extensive reading program, inspired by Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, using graded readers with ten and 11 year-old learners with Pakistani origin. Hafiz and Tudor (1989) concluded:

These results would appear to indicate that the extensive reading program undertaken had effected a substantial improvement in subject’s linguistic proficiency, and would thus appear to lend support to the hypothesis that an input-based and acquisition-oriented mode of learning can lead to an improvement in learners linguistic skills in second language, as regards reading and writing at last. (Hafiz and Tudor, 1989:8)

ER has been introduced to primary school learners in Norway. An Early Years Literacy Programme (EYLP) was introduced to 3rd and 4th grades at Nylund primary school in Stavanger (Drew, 2009). The program introduced the learners to a substantial number of graded readers and the aim was for the learners to read regularly. Drew concluded that there were improvements in language development, but that the EYLP was possibly not the sole contributor.

Despite the fact that a number of factors, especially the teacher, may contribute to learners’ performance, it seems likely that the substantial amounts of reading done by the Nylund pupils, which was one of the major differences between the approach at Nylund school and the two control schools, was instrumental in enhancing oral skills (Drew, 2009:118).

Hauer (2012) conducted a study in Norway, which involved introducing two groups of learners to a six-week ER intervention. One group used textbooks and the other group was

introduced to graded readers. Hauer's conclusion was that there is a need of reading material aside from the curriculum, as the groups who experienced the ER intervention had a shift from negative to positive attitudes toward reading in English. The results of these studies confirm the benefits of an ER program in language learning.

4.5.4 Extensive reading in Norwegian EFL classrooms

Although the *LK06* curriculum puts more emphasis on reading than prior curricula, it has been argued that there is room for improvement. Charboneau (2012) and Hellekjær (2007) argue that there is much to be desired in terms of how reading is taught in Norway and advocate the use of an extensive reading approach. Charboneau (2012) claims that there is a strong textbook tradition in Norway. This correlates to the findings in a comparative study on teachers' experiences of primary EFL in Norway and the Netherlands conducted by Drew et al. (2007). Seven out of ten Norwegian teachers participating in the study reported using the textbook exclusively. According to Drew et al. (2007), primary EFL in Norway focuses on developing communicative skills, and giving less attention to improving writing skills.

Hellekjær (2007:5) argues that low competence in reading can "(...)be explained by deficiencies in current Norwegian EFL instruction".

Reasons for low scores on national tests are surely a complex matter, and Hellekjær (2007) mentions three possible deficiencies:

The main reason is the heavy reliance on textbook reading from elementary school onwards, and in particular the focus on reading for detail and the tendency to explain all unfamiliar words and expressions, which inculcate a counterproductive way of reading in large numbers of pupils. This problem is further exacerbated by a lack of focus on extensive reading that would help pupils develop the ability to vary how they read according to reading purpose. Last, the problem is compounded by the long-term neglect of the teaching of reading and learning strategies from the middle school level onwards, in Norwegian as well as in English (Hellekjær, 2007:5).

Drew (2009:110) also points to the discrepancy of the national curriculum and the Norwegian teacher education and argues, "There is considerable room for improving the quality of English education in Norwegian schools", and that there is a high number of EFL primary

teachers with little or no formal qualifications in English. Consequently, he claims there is a shortage of qualified English teachers in Norwegian primary school (Drew et al., 2007:334). The views of Charboneau, Hellekjær and Drew imply that the English teacher education in Norway needs improvements.

Research suggests that if the learners find reading pleasurable, it will stimulate them to read extensively, which in turn will increase the learners' reading skills and raise their level of English proficiency. Vellutino and Salon (2003), cited in Grabe (2009:310), argue "Fluent reading depends heavily on a great deal of practice in reading, spelling and writing. It also depends on reading and rereading material at an appropriate level of difficulty." This view is supported in Krashen's (2004) research, amongst many, where the use of extensive reading in mixed ability classes improves language skills. As in most classrooms, there is a wide range in pupils' skills and competence in Norwegian EFL classrooms. The learners will encounter new vocabulary, lexical (word) patterns, collocation and lexical phrases that are not taught in their textbooks. Hence, extensive reading gives learners a better understanding of the language that is being taught.

Considering the reported benefits of ER in an EFL learning classroom, Renadya and Jacobs (2002:299) pose an interesting question: Why aren't we all doing extensive reading? This raises interesting questions regarding the methods used in Norwegian EFL classrooms, especially to what extent ER is implemented and how it is in compliance with *LK06*. Two of the easy reader book series, in English, that are published in Norway are *Damm's Galaxy* and *Read me!*. Damm Cappelen has produced *Damm's Galaxy*, which is a series of easy readers with different levels of difficulty ranging from 1 to 6. Det Norske Samlaget has produced a book series *Read me!* (Drew et al., 2009), consisting of eight easy readers where a variety of topics are introduced through three levels of difficulty. The *Read me!* book series is primarily intended for grades 5 to 7.

The use of ER relates to the following competence aims after tenth grade: being able to describe and assess work in learning English, read and understand texts of different lengths and genres, understand spoken and written texts on a variety of topics, select listening, reading and writing strategies adapted to the purpose and situation, read and discuss a representative selection of literary texts from the genres poetry, short stories, novels, and drama from the English-speaking world, prepare and discuss own oral and written texts inspired by literature and art, describe theme and composition in texts and visual expressions.

It also seems reasonable to look at how IR relates to the competence aims after 10th grade. However, it appears to be an intricate matter to make a clear distinction between the

competence aims and the use of the different approaches separately, as ER and IR are both approaches that can be used to meet the requirements of the learners' learning outcomes. To illustrate, one can ask which of the two approaches relates to the following competence aim: "Read and discuss a representative selection of literary texts from the genres poetry, short stories, novels and drama from the English-speaking world". By employing an ER approach, the learner can read various literary texts from a selection of book from an ER library. After a couple of weeks reading various genres, the learners can then discuss what they have read in a peer discussion in class, or a similar after-reading activity. By using an IR approach, the learners can read different passages, essays and articles in the textbook and do the comprehension tasks in the textbook, followed by a peer discussion. Despite both ER and IR approaches being valid approaches in relation to the above-mentioned competence aim in English subject curriculum, Charboneau (2012) claims that of the two methods, the IR approach is the main approach used in EFL classrooms.

Day and Bamford (1998:41) suggest four ways to integrate ER into the curriculum. Firstly, as a separate standalone course, where extensive reading is given a set time as a separate course within second language learning. Second, as a part of an existing reading course, which allows the learners to read in class. Third, as a noncredit addition to an existing course, which involves reading as an optional assignment. Finally, as an extracurricular activity, which involves reading after school.

All four are possible ways of integrating ER into a Norwegian EFL classroom. However, as earlier discussed, the reading approach used in the classroom is not the sole variable contributing to learning. The learners' opinions, attitudes, motivation and individual needs are other factors that will have a great impact on learning. Hence, it seems necessary to look at the role of motivation in second language learning.

4.6. The role of motivation in second language learning and reading

To comprehend a text the reader has to have knowledge about lexical features, semantic and syntactic features, as well as how to phonologically process this. According to Grabe (2009:17), the process of reading development is a process from cognitive learning to associative to autonomous learning, meaning that a learner needs time, effort, and motivation in order to achieve this understanding of reading and increase to their reading abilities. This implies that a learner has to be motivated in order to increase their reading abilities. Schiefele

et al. (2012) state that there is a correlation between the amount of reading for enjoyment and reading competence.

Despite the low scores in reading in the OECD PISA surveys (Hellekjær, 2007) and Statistics Norway's report on a decrease in reading interest, there are relatively few studies conducted in Norwegian lower secondary schools where the attention is aimed at learners' experiences and opinions toward reading in English. I found little research on opinions per se. However, there has been research conducted on attitudes. Hauer (2012) conducted a "reading opinion test" of participants' opinions on reading in order to assess their attitudes toward reading in English as a foreign language. The age of the participants was not revealed in the study, hence it is not clear if this was conducted at a primary or lower secondary school. The study reports that reluctant readers became eager readers, which implies that the learners' attitude to reading changed.

There are several factors contributing to a learner's motivation in language learning. This is in accordance with Wigfield and Guthrie's (1997:428) findings, as they conclude this in their study of 4th and 5th graders' motivation: "A major conclusion from our results is that reading motivation indeed is multifaceted." They point to self-efficacy, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and social aspects. Similarly, McKenna's (1995) study on reading attitudes of children aged 5 - 12 concludes that attitudes are gradually shaped from social factors and expectations. This raises the question of whether the expectations are too low, or too high, in Norwegian schools.

Nuttall (2005) suggests that although a learner might see the benefits of knowing a foreign language, motivation can be low as the learners only use the language in the classroom. In other words, the learner might see the long-term benefits, but it does not apply to them on a day-to-day basis as they do not use the language outside school. According to Nuttall (2005:130) a wide selection of books is important factor and she argues that if reading is actively promoted the learners will begin to read, and points out that "(...) wanting to read is an incentive for everyone. Enjoyment is the key". However, the learners might have low self-efficacy, which might prevent them from reading. Nygård (1976:311) explains this by providing an illustration of motivation and self-efficacy based on McClelland's (1986) view of the role of self-efficacy, learners' motivation and its outcome.

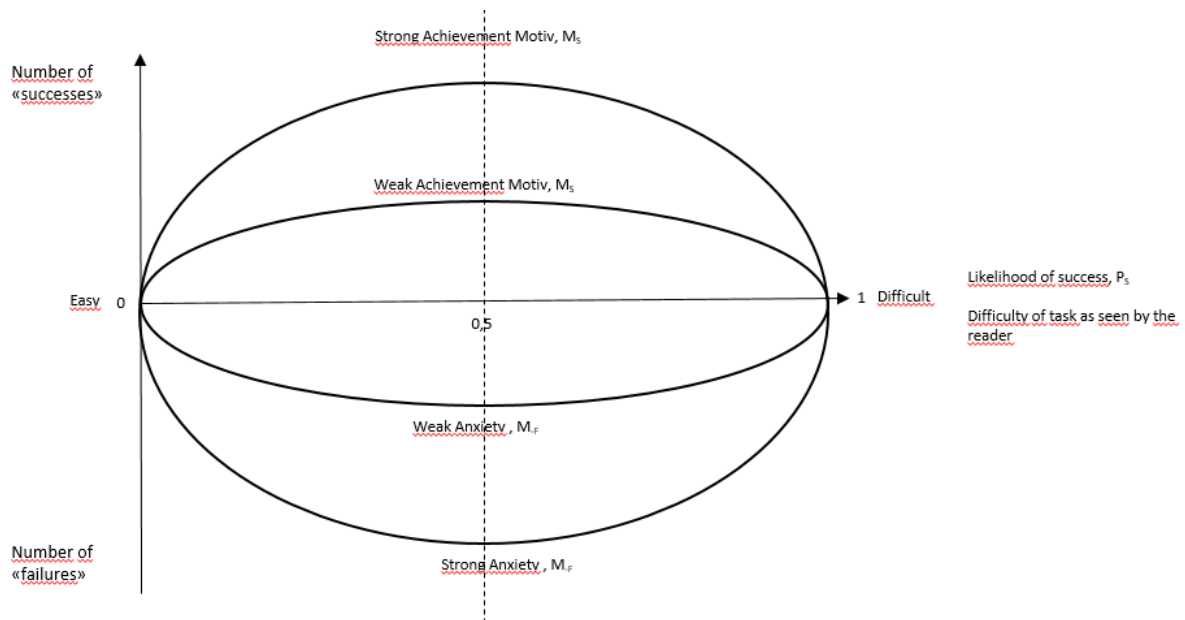


Figure 1. McClelland's (1986) model for achievement motivation

The model illustrates that if a learner is to choose a book that is too easy the learner will lose motivation. Likewise, if a learner chooses a book that is far beyond their level of reading proficiency (too difficult), the result is the same. This is closely related to what Guthrie (2008:66) refers to as a “downward spiral”, meaning that if a learner doubts his skills he will start to avoid texts, homework and precludes himself from improving his skills.

This implies that failure leads to low motivation, and that in order for the learner to increase motivation and self-efficacy, the learner needs to choose a book that is not too easy nor too difficult, but difficult enough to give the learner a sense of accomplishment.

Another perspective on motivation is the physical space e.g classroom, in which the reading takes place. Merleau-Ponty (1962) argues that understanding the spatiality of the classroom offers a distinct point of analysis in trying to understand an ongoing activity. To exemplify what Merleau-Ponty means by spatiality and motivation, he presents aspects of the “grey zone” in more detail as “grey” related to most aspects of the classroom. The entrance door was grey, the hallway was painted grey, and the room itself was grey. In contrast, the rest of the school’s hallways had a different color for each floor. The “grey zone” was located on the ground floor. The classroom had four desks, a couch and two shelves with a couple of easy reader’s books, magazines and games. Considering this, the grey zone did not seem to be either an inspirational classroom or a place for learning.

In addition, Grey Zone implies “a place in between” which can be perceived as temporal placement, as the pupils did not fit in regular teaching sessions. These learners had difficulties writing and spelling and they would most definitely not read a book. All of them lacked motivation for school as they saw no purpose in being there. They were left to their own, no teacher to make sure their individual needs were met, no teacher to check homework or attendance, no teacher to give positive feedback to them nor to guide them in the right direction. To become a “grey zone” learner or a reluctant reader is not desirable for any learners. When a learner is being referred to as a learner in the “grey zone”, the downward spiral of low self-efficacy has already set in, and the process of becoming a motivated, autonomous learner is even more of a challenge. (Guthrie, 2008:66)

5. Methodology, methods and research design

The overarching aim for the research project was to gain knowledge about lower secondary Norwegian learners' experiences toward reading in English as a foreign language (EFL). This chapter will describe and discuss methodological aspects pertaining to this study. First, the methodological framework will be outlined and discussed. Thereafter the actual process of gathering data about the learners' reading experiences by way of semi-structured interviews is described in detail. Finally, I will discuss the analytical approach and, herein, outline my strategies for securing a sound level of reliability and validity. At the very end of this chapter, I will reflect upon questions regarding ethical aspects pertaining to the study. Hence, this chapter focuses on the methodology and methods used with the aim of exploring the following research questions:

- How did a group of Norwegian lower secondary school EFL learners describe their experiences with reading in English?
- How did the learners experience an intervention adopting key principles from ER?

Focusing on “experiences” implies a strong, overall focus on the learners' perspective. At the same time it may be argued that experiences are epistemologically more fundamental in nature than opinions and meanings, as pre-thought and pre-conceptualization, and this poses particular challenges from a research perspective. The relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods can be described from a bottom-up approach in the following way (Guba and Lincoln, 1994):

Method	The actual research methods applied
Methodology	Theory of research methods
Epistemology	Theory of knowledge. What can we know?
Ontology	The nature of being. What is?

Table 1: The relationship between ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods

This chapter primarily addresses the two upper levels, methodology and method, with the aim of creating the necessary level of transparency of how the study was conducted, and

how the choice of research methods can be justified from a methodological perspective.

5.1 Research design

A total of ten lower secondary learners at a Norwegian school participated in this study. The participants, who have been anonymized, were interviewed on their literacy experiences one-to-one on two occasions. The interviews were conducted applying a qualitative, semi-structured approach (Kvale, 2008).

The first interview was conducted prior to a four-week extensive reading program intervention. This will be referred to as the pre-interview (see Appendix D). Following the pre-interview, the participants were introduced to extensive reading through a four week ER program intervention focusing on reading graded reader books. Following the four weeks of the ER intervention, the participants were once again interviewed, but now with focus primarily on their reading experience during the ER intervention. This interview will be referred to as the post-interview (see Appendix E).

In addition, the empirical base for this study also includes a tape-recorded interview with the learners' English teacher. The interview was conducted after the ER intervention and the post-interview. The objective of the teacher-interview was to triangulate some of the findings from the pre- and post interviews with the learners (Golafshani, 2003; Silverman, 2006).

5.2 Research methodology

Epistemologically, the notion of "research" comes from the old French noun "recherché", or verb "recercher", which means, "to search". Dörnyei (2007:15) more clearly defines this broad description by describing research as "disciplined inquiry" into a theme or subject. One way of distinguishing a text of research from any other text is that it cannot leave description, meaning or understanding implicitly (van Manen, 1990). A researcher's aim is to move from the unknown to known in an explicit way that allows the reader to follow and validate both the process and the output (Golafshani, 2003).

The actual selection of research method should be instrumental by nature, and dictated by the research question at hand (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Hence, it is critical to choose the most appropriate ways of conducting the research to acquire sufficient valid

and reliable information in order to answer the research question at hand. At the same time, it is to be expected that the researcher understands epistemological implications of his or her choices. In other words, what can in fact be derived or deduced about the phenomenon of interest? The reflection on these implications is often referred to as methodology, and how they relate to the validity and reliability of the research is a higher-level discussion than the choice of research method. Silvermann (2001) makes the following distinction between methodology and methods:

A methodology refers to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis etc. in planning and executing a research study. So our methodology defines how we will go about studying any phenomenon. (...) methods are specific research techniques. (Silvermann, 2001:4)

Over time, two discrete paradigms in research methodology have evolved: Qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research focuses on gaining an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations, by describing, clarifying and interpreting them. Methods applied are often unstructured or semi-structured techniques, for example individual in-depth interviews (Kvale, 2008), group discussions or immersive fieldwork. Quantitative research, on the other hand, sets out to bring forth quantifiable data, to measure and generalize results from a sample of a given population. Methods used in order to gain a large sample to quantify variables are structured techniques, such as questionnaires (often online) and on-street or telephone interviews.

Fossåskaret (1997) argues that while generalizability and predictability are the marks of quality of a quantitative study, overarching acknowledgement or understanding is the mark of quality pertaining to a qualitative study. Thus, it seems that while neither the objective nor the output from qualitative studies is to generalize or predict, data from one informant alone may very well be recognized and hold relevance also for others. Such an assumption underpins the idea that interviewing a small group of learners may hold promise of understandings with relevance even outside of the group of individuals interviewed.

Silverman (2001:12) points out that methods like observations, textual analysis, interviews and audio/video recording can be used for both quantitative and qualitative research, although the way one uses the methods varies depending on the type of research.

For example, quantitative researchers do not favor observation as “(...)observers may record different observations”, but tend use textual analysis where the researcher can count “(...)in terms of the researcher’s categories.” In contrast, observational studies are “fundamental” to qualitative research as they are often used for “(...)understanding another culture.” Silverman goes on to discuss the features of the two methods and then “divide” researchers into the two approaches.

Dörnyei (2007) seems to disagree with such a view, and refers to Rossmann and Wilson’s (1985) view on a purist approach where qualitative and quantitative methodology is looked upon as “mutually exclusive” (Dörnyei, 2007:29). Dörnyei (2007:20) coins the term “mixed methods research”, which is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methodology for the purpose of “(...) offering the best of both worlds”. However, as stated above, most literature will argue that the choice of methodology and research methods should always depend on the research questions or problem at hand. In this respect, the choice of method becomes a strategic and even tactical choice rooted in the research questions to be investigated. The method, then, is the tactical execution ensuring the results can withstand scientific critique (Silverman, 2001).

Dörnyei (2007) has provided an overview over key characteristics of qualitative research as an attempt to contrast it with more quantitative approaches. He states that qualitative research typically will adopt an emergent research design with flexibility in both the design and the study itself and that the study will usually take place in situations where the respondents are learning, working, etc. A qualitative study will normally have a small sample size or a small number of participants, but work with a wide range of data, such as recorded interviews, field notes and other documents.

A thought-provoking statement from Dörnyei (2007) is that the research outcome from a qualitative research is ultimately the product of the researcher’s subjective interpretation of the data. This means that for a qualitative study not to fall into utter relativism or “anything goes”, it must have inbuilt mechanisms to ensure that if an other researcher did the same study, and followed the same steps, the results would likely be very similar. This means that the notions of reliability and validity are of equal importance in a qualitative study as compared to quantitative studies, where they are long established as non-negotiable and important criteria for deeming the quality of the research undertaken (Kvale, 1989; Morse et al., 2002).

This study focuses primarily on understanding learners’ experiences in reading. However, seeing that the experiences are found at a deeper level in our cognitive

hierarchy, it was decided that these experiences would be best explored by utilizing methods that seek to explore and describe the learner's self-perception of a phenomenon. This is in contrast to how the researcher has a pre-conceived understanding and categorization of the phenomenon studied.

In order to encourage a reaction and reflection, I conducted an educational intervention with an ER-program. Approaches leveraging an intervention of some sort are often labeled as *action research* (Barab and Squire, 2004; Tiller, 1995). The essence of action research project methodology is the combination of different levels of techniques, methods or theories. An action research project research usually combines a variety of data collection methods such as interviews, observation and document archives (Dörnyei, 2007). Furthermore, action research projects are often conducted in cultures or organizations well known to the researcher. In this study, the intervention and the pre- and post-interviews were conducted in a lower secondary school, similar to the one where I have my regular work. This has its distinct advantages but may also represent some potential risks and disadvantages. This dilemma will be discussed in more detail below.

5.2.1 The qualitative interview

In qualitative methodology, there is a whole specter of different methodologies and methods. For the purpose of this study, with its stated research questions, a deliberate choice was made to combine an educational intervention with pre-and post-intervention interviews.

There are various types of interviewing techniques and approaches that can be used within a qualitative framework. According to Dörnyei (2007:134), the following are among the typical qualitative interview approaches. Firstly, there is the *structured interview*, where the researchers ask questions from a prepared and elaborated interview guide, asking questions strictly from the guide to keep the interviewee on the target topic. There is little or no room for variation and adaptation to issues raised by the informant during a structured interview. The purpose is to ensure a certain level of reliability and validity by allowing all informants to respond to exactly the same questions.

Secondly, there is the *unstructured interview*. With such an approach there is no detailed interview guide prepared, and the interviewee is allowed to elaborate and discuss all issues she finds relevant to the topic. Such an approach is also discussed in-depth by

Mellin-Olsen (1996) and Fog (1994), who both argue for the value in running interviews similar to regular conversations.

Thirdly, there is a middle-ground approach called *semi-structured interviews*. In these kind of interviews there is normally a prepared interview guide but with open-ended questions. The interviewee is allowed to elaborate and add information to the questions asked, and the interviewer may deviate from the interview guide to follow up or deepen her understanding on a particular issue presented by the interviewee. Kvale (1996) has promoted such an approach in his much-cited books *InterViews*, and later *Doing interviews* (Kvale, 2008).

Based on the criteria above, this study can be seen as an action research study, utilizing semi-structured qualitative interviews as well as an extensive reading intervention to gain insight into EFL learners' experiences with reading.

However, initially the plan was to use a structured questionnaire as the preferred method of data collection. This method of data collection was discussed with fellow students, as well as three English teachers who work in a lower secondary school. The question was how appropriate and suitable such an approach would be to gain valid information from "reluctant readers" age 13-15. Based on these discussions, the conclusion was to change the approach, and instead conduct face-to-face, one-to-one semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. The advice from peers, the English teachers and what was found in relevant, previous research, suggested that such interviews held greater potential for understanding the learners' experiences and opinions compared to a structured questionnaire. The chosen approach seems to be supported by Flick (2002:74), as he points out that "(...)the interviewed subjects' viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in a relatively open designed interview situation(...)".

The next decision to be made was if the interviews were to be conducted in English or Norwegian. It was decided that the interview should be conducted in Norwegian and not in English since the primary purpose of this project was not to measure English skills but to explore learners' experiences of reading in English. Conducting a face-to-face interview with one participant at a time is likely to create a quiet atmosphere and more importantly, no discomfort or alteration in answers caused by peers being nearby or giving comments. It seems reasonable to argue that this would contribute towards a more valid outcome in terms of the results being as accurate as possible in terms of describing each individual learner's experiences.

5.3 Selection of participants

Ten learners from 9th and 10th grade were identified by their teacher and then approached by myself according to the guidelines from The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

The learners participating in the project were considered “reluctant readers” by their teacher. These learners had, over time, shown difficulties in connecting with books independently and reading for enjoyment alone. The criteria for the learners being described as reluctant readers and/or weak learners were, that they had been unable to follow ordinary lessons successfully, they demonstrated poor reading skills, low proficiency level of English (below the expected level in accordance with *LK06*), negative utterances and/or negative attitudes toward reading and/or showing no or little interest in reading.

Learners in lower secondary school were selected to be the target group for this study for two reasons: Firstly, my personal experience as a substitute teacher for five years has given me some insight into learners’ outlook on reading. In my experience, the majority of learners’ aged 6-12 attending primary school had a positive outlook and seemed eager to read. In contrast, I experienced greater reluctance toward reading in English, and reading in general, with learners aged 13- 16. Secondly, there are several studies conducted with the focus on Norwegian learners’ English literacy skills (e.g Charboneau, 2013; Drew, 2010; Drew, 2009; Hasselgren, 2000; Hauer, 2012; Hellekjær, 2009; Lie, Kjærnsli, Roe, and Turmo, 2001; Rindal and Piercy, 2013) but only a few studies (e.g Brevik and Moe, 2012; Drew and Pedersen, 2010; Hoel and Helgevold, 2005; Skogen, 2013) can be found on experiences, opinions, attitudes and motivation toward reading in English as a foreign language in a lower secondary school in Norway. However, research involving Norwegian lower secondary EFL learners’ reading experiences combined with an ER intervention is not found.

Also, based on the previously described experiences from the “grey zone”, it soon became an ambition to learn more about the reading experiences of EFL learners in lower secondary school, and how an extensive reading program could influence on the said experiences.

The selection of school for this study was primarily due to a previous practice-period at this particular school. This fact made it easier for me to gain access to the relevant informants within the timeframe of the research. Also, practical considerations

such as choosing a school in the region I live in became of importance, as conducting interviews one-by-one, introducing the ER project, supplying books and organizing the ER library, is time consuming and it is beneficial to have a short distance between the lower secondary school, the University and home.

The previous practice-period in an EFL classroom for 8th- 10th graders had provided me with good knowledge about this particular school, the teachers and challenges faced in encouraging learners to read, especially in a mixed ability classroom. During the four weeks of teacher practice, I noticed my supervisor's passion for reading and how this particular teacher seemed to stress the importance of encouraging the learners to read several books during the school year. Based on this, I contacted the Head of English at the school, my former supervisor, to inquire about the possibility of conducting the project in one of her classes. The supervisor was informed about the project in detail, and received both the research questions, the suggested methodological approach, as well as "letter of consent" by e-mail. The supervisor was kindly asked to invite reluctant readers/ weak readers in 8th, 9th and 10th grade to participate in the project.

The assumption was that a wide selection of participants is always an advantage when conducting a study. However, seeing that this was a small study and that the interviewees were to be interviewed one-by-one, the number of participants had to be manageable. For that reason, the teacher was asked to invite ten to fifteen learners to participate in the study.

The teacher conversed with each individual learner and informed him or her about the project and that it involved "participation in a new reading project". According to Norwegian law the study could only proceed based on the participants' and their parents' consent to participate in the study. However, this raised a concern regarding the issues of confidentiality and anonymity. In order for the participants to remain anonymous, I have not logged any identifying information about the participants, teacher or the school in question.

The English teacher chose five Norwegian participants from 9th grade: all girls, 14 years of age, and five participants from 10th grade: 4 Norwegian boys and one Lithuanian girl. These participants were chosen as they all, according to their teacher, had shown no or little interest in reading English. In Norway, a learner starts with English language learning in 1st grade, when they are 6-7 years old. Hence, the participants had 8-9 years of prior English language learning and reading. I had no personal knowledge of the

participants, and did not meet the participants until the day of the pre-intervention one-on-one interview.

5.4 The interview process

Both Marshall and Rossmann (1999), and Kvale (1996) advocate interviews as a research method to gain qualitative insights. Marshall and Rossmann (1999:110) argue that, “Combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to understand the meaning that people hold for their everyday activity”. This corresponds well with my intentions for this study. Similarly, Kvale (1997:17) claims, “a qualitative research interview purpose is to understand the world from interviewees’ point of view, to bring about the significance of people's experiences, and to unveil their experiences of the world they live in, prior to scientific explanations” (My translation).

Kvale’s point on understanding lived experience with reading from the learners’ point of view, prior to scientific explanations, came across as a particularly relevant approach given my research questions, as this study was about uncovering and understanding the learners’ experiences with reading. Conducting interviews is a way to gather knowledge about the experiences, attitudes, opinions and the participants’ preferences, expressed in their own words. Interviewing is a common method lending itself to particularly well to small-scale educational research. The reason for this is that it can be executed over a short period of time, with rich data output, and this makes it manageable also within the framework of a master thesis like this one. This is in consonance with Marshall and Rossmann (1998:18) as they state, “An interview is a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly”. Realizing that this dissertation had to be planned, executed and analyzed within four months, from August - December, I had to retrieve data, and still leave time for analysis, all within a short period of time.

Another element to the interview preparation was to do a pilot test. A pilot test will assist the research in determining if there are flaws, limitations, or other weaknesses within the interview design and will allow the interviewer to make necessary revisions prior to the intervention of the study (Kvale, 1997). The interview guide was piloted with two other master students, and the questions were discussed with a college professor. Throughout this we discovered that some of the questions seemed repetitive, and made adjustment accordingly. Hence, the initial interview guide was altered after the piloting in

order to achieve more specific answers to the questions asked. The adjustments aimed at challenged the participants to elaborate on their answer with specific examples.

There were several key factors I took into consideration when designing the interview-guide in Norwegian. Firstly, this is a small sample study with 10-15 participants where a one-to-one interview was manageable. Secondly, there was the assumption that the learners' English proficiency skills were below average, resulting in too short or non-existing answers if given a questionnaire, consequently resulting in inadequate data for the analysis. Thirdly, the participants should be encouraged to elaborate on their views in the conversation and some of the ideas that emerge from the learner himself, not solely "constructed" by the interviewer as the aim was to collect authentic or "naturally occurring" (Silvermann, 2001:159) data. Nevertheless, it is the interviewer's role to navigate the conversation so that it touches upon the themes in accordance to the interview guide.

Even though both a quantitative and qualitative questionnaire could potentially have conveyed experiences with reading, a semi-structured interview lets the participants add and elaborate additional information related to the experience they describe. For example, the learners can tick of a box stating that they feel reading is boring, but the reason or meaning behind their statement is left out. In contrast, in an interview the learners can be asked to elaborate on a statement about reading being boring.

In this small-scale study it was of importance to obtain elaborated answers in order to get insight and understanding of the experiences the learners had with reading. A real-life example from one of the interviews is this one: "I think reading is boring, because I am not good at it." Having the chance to follow up on the participant's response and not solely make an assumption about the significance of the respondent's reply of boring, is very important to gain a good understanding of what hides behind "boring".

The use of a tape recorder during an interview is the most common method of recording (Kvale, 1997), as it leaves the interviewer free to concentrate on the interview itself and allows one to replay the tape numerous times while transcribing the conversation and pay attention to pitch, tone, pauses and so on.

Nevertheless, the interviews with the participants in this study were not tape-recorded. This was a choice made while developing the interview guide and the choice was based on discussions with peers, teacher colleagues and thesis supervisor. There were three reasons for this choice. First was the concern of possible effects of the young participants in an unfamiliar setting. The aim of the interviews was to get an authentic and

honest answer from the participants and it was assumed that a tape recorded interview with a lower secondary school learner would construct “unnatural” answers as young participants might feel uncomfortable, have minor fears in an unfamiliar setting, especially the formality of being asked somewhat personal questions and having their answers audio taped by an unfamiliar person. A possible (unwanted) effect was that the participants would give answers that they assumed would be appropriate and/or correct. However, it is difficult to establish the validity of the participants’ response, Tiller (1995) state that this is a major concern in all interviewing. “At the philosophical or conceptual level the problem is that of how can we distinguish true appearances from false appearances or, put differently, knowledge from opinion or belief” (Tiller, 1995).

Secondly, the learners participating in this project are reluctant readers in lower secondary school, and according to experiences reported by teacher colleagues, the challenge for an interviewer would not be to keep track of the feedback from the learners but the contrary, get the learners to express themselves and elaborate on their experiences and views on reading. Therefore, an interview in Norwegian seemed appropriate, as this would allow the learners to express themselves in their mother tongue. Lastly, using a tape recorder while interviewing is mainly used for discourse analysis, this was not the aim of this study. Recording and transcribing the answers therefore seemed unnecessary. In addition to expected short answers (data to transcribe), one also considered the time limitations to the thesis.

5.4.1 Pre-interview with the EFL learners

In this research project, the EFL learners were interviewed on their literacy experiences prior to the intervention of the ER project. The EFL learners were interviewed one-on-one, in the “quiet zone” in the school’s library. The library was a room located in the middle of the school, and there was not a librarian present. Each class had set times for when they could use the library, hence the interviews could be executed when no one was scheduled to be there. The library consisted of different sections, with bookshelves as room dividers. In some corners there was a couch, some had desks and chairs, and the section where the interviews was conducted was closest to the English bookshelf. Behind this shelf, there was two desk and four chairs. This created an appropriate place for the interview as no one could see either the interviewer or interviewees when entering the front door. There were

comfortable chairs and the interviewer could sit in front of the interviewee allowing for eye contact. All in all the setting must be said to be quiet and comfortable for conducting these interviews.

The participants were not informed of the specific questions in the interview guide prior to the interview. The questions were read to them from the interview guide in Norwegian and I took notes as they replied in Norwegian. The first part, questions one to four of the interview, involved an exploration of their literacy experiences, for example books read, reading interests in their home, and literacy experiences in school. The second part, questions five to nine, involved questions related to reading homework, reading for pleasure, reading in English and the learners' reflections and experiences towards reading.

The aims of the pre-interview were to identify if they had read any English material and what they liked and disliked about reading. Did they find it too easy or too difficult? Did they enjoy a good plot or find it boring? Did they have a different reading experience if the reading was not related to school material, but rather a book of their own choice? Also, I tried to glean out information about their literacy development, and their experience with reading. The background for these questions was to establish any potential correlations between the participants being reluctant readers and their former reading experiences. Additionally it was considered important and relevant to get insight into their experiences with reading for an academic purpose (test or other task given by teacher), reading in English and their experience with reading a book of their own choice. Finally, I wanted to better understand how they valued reading compared to other pastimes like watching TV or doing sports.

5.4.2 Post-interview with the EFL learners

The post-interview conducted was with the same group as the pre-interviews (see Appendix E). The purpose was to establish what kind of experiences with reading the learners had during the four week ER-intervention. Hence, it comprised primarily of questions related to the intervention period. Examples of questions asked in the post-intervention interview were: *What books have you read in the last four weeks? Why did you choose these books in particular? Which book did you find most fun to read? Explain why. Has anyone in your family displayed an interest in the books you've read the last four weeks? How do you feel about reading when the teacher does not question you about the*

book nor give any tasks related to text you read? Do you think you have learned something new in the last four weeks? Explain. What did you like most about this reading project?

5.4.3 Interview with the English teacher

A semi-structured interview was also conducted with the learners' English teacher on how the teacher viewed the learners' attitudes toward reading in English (see Appendix F). The purpose of this interview was to compare the learners' views with views from their teacher. Furthermore, I wanted to explore the teacher's views on implementing ER in lower secondary schools in Norway.

Following the same semi-structured approach, the teacher was also given the opportunity to elaborate and/or add valuable information regarding the learners, the curriculum and how she normally implemented curricular activities. An overarching aim for the teacher interview was to gain knowledge about the teacher's view on the Norwegian learners' experiences, opinions and attitudes toward reading in English as a foreign language.

The teacher was informed that she participated anonymously, and that no record of her identity was kept either electronically or in written format. It was also explained that the nature of the interview was semi-structured, and she was encouraged to elaborate on any particular point of interest or relevance. Examples of some of the questions were: *An article in Stavanger Aftenblad reported that only one 9th grade class in Stavanger had reached their national goal in reading score. What is your opinion as a teacher on the level of reading in Lower secondary school? What about reading skills in English as a foreign language?*

These questions were asked to get an understanding of the teacher's viewpoint on reading skills, both in L1 and L2 language. *LK06* gives great attention to reading, and learning objectives for all pupils. *In a mixed ability class what are the attitudes towards reading in English? What could be reasons/factors for some learners enjoying to read while others struggles?* By asking questions regarding *LK06* objectives and learners' attitude, the teacher was encouraged to reflect on whether or not there is a gap between the learning objectives and mixed ability classrooms' learning outcomes. Further to this, she was challenged on reflecting upon the weighting between individual learners' experiences, the *LK06* and the teacher role.

5.5 The extensive reading intervention

As a benchmark further to the potential of a four-week ER-intervention, Day and Bamford (1998) make reference to a four-week summer project where an intervention of ER program gave positive gains in reading. Mason and Krashen (1997) report showed that “(...)reluctant EFL readers at a Japanese university made statistically significant gains on a cloze test after a semester of reading extensively” (Mason and Krashen, 1997). This raises the question if this could hold relevance to the Norwegian learners of English as a foreign language as well.

Graded readers were employed in the extensive reading program intervention. Graded readers are books written at different levels of difficulty where the lower levels are often well illustrated, and contain few and short sentences with simplified vocabulary and the font size is often larger than in a “regular” book aimed at the same age level (Day et al., 2011).

Day and Bamford (1998) refer to grader readers as language learner literature. Hundreds of graded readers exist on a wide variety of topics such as thriller, horror, romance, biography, fiction, factual and so on, all in different levels of difficulty. The benefits and an elaborated definition of grader readers and extensive reading are described in the theoretical framework (see section 4.5.2). This section is divided into three subsections: The ER intervention, the reading material and observation.

5.5.1 The ER intervention

The thought behind an ER program is that learners choose what to read and when to read, with no tasks related to the reading. The participants in this project read one book from *Read me!* selection during the first week of the intervention. Subsequently, the participants chose a book from the ER selection in the library and they had three weeks to read it. The book of choice was read at home or at school (during spare time), and the participants decided themselves if they were to read the entire book at once or divide chapter and read at certain days. There were not any book reports or oral presentations related to the reading. The learners were given a “Reading Record Form (Hauer, 2011) of the books they read, and they were allowed to replace the book they chose if the book was found to

be too challenging. During the same period they were not given any homework or assignment related to their reading. The reading required self-discipline and interest from the participants, as they were to read outside of regular teaching hours. Neither the teacher nor the interviewer would set aside time to read or get involved in when or where to read. The teacher's role was solely selecting the participants and being aware that her learners had reading in addition to the regular homework. The interviewer did not meet or have correspondence with the participants other than during the pre- interview, the selection of books, and the pre interview.

5.5.2 Reading material

I visited the school's library prior to the project and acquainted myself properly with the selection of graded readers and the selection of books in the library's English section. The intention was for the learners to freely choose a book from the library and read it at home. However, it was expected that the learner would discuss their choices with the researcher, as it was important for the participant to choose a book within their level, in order to be able to complete the book without having to look up words in the dictionary, and more importantly, to be able to complete the book.

Choosing a book without tasks attached to it means reading for enjoyment only. Choosing the right books is of utmost importance in any reading program so that learners are encouraged and not forced to read. Ideally, books in the library should be of newer date in order to capture the interest of the learner, for example by visually colorful and attractive cover. The printed text should suit the age and interest level of students (Day et. al., 2011). Similarly, Simensen (1998:167-168) suggests that by introducing them to a graded readers series, as opposed to a random selection of books written in English, the participants can be given a selection of books containing authentic text yet simplified language at an age appropriate level.

It was considered to introduce the learners to graded readers aimed at 9th graders. However, since the participants in this study are reluctant readers of English, it seemed reasonable to introduce the program with a book at one level below their expected level of proficiency, as the learners would benefit from comprehending and complete reading a book, no matter how easy the level. The purpose was for them to experience the sense of accomplishment. Therefore, the participants were initially introduced to the graded readers

series *Read me!* (Drew et. al., 2009), and were asked to choose to read one book out of the *Read me!* selection. The *Read Me!* series of books consist of eight easy readers at three levels of difficulty, and primarily intended for grades 5 to 7. The titles in the *Read me!* series are: Level 1: *Camping Mystery* and *The Kind Lion*. Level 2: *The Viking Family*, *The Wadi* and *Weird Creatures*. Level 3: *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Solskjær: A Football legend* and *The Swan Knight*. In addition, an ER library was provided to the participants. It comprised of approximately 50 books at the school library and, in addition, eight books from my own selection of graded readers. The selection were books written especially for young adults, in that the subject matter and story lines are typically consistent with the age and experience of the main character. The stories often focus on the challenges of the youth. Examples were Heinemann Guided Readers, Cambridge English Readers and a small selection of other easy-read books written for teenagers.

5.5.3 Observation

Following finishing reading a book from *Read me!* series, the learners had a selection of books at the school library to choose from. The learners did not choose a book randomly, but chose one in collaboration with myself: I discussed his/her reading experience with the *Read me!* book to see if they found it too short, too easy or difficult vocabulary? I also asked them about their interest and favorite genre. The learners went to the bookshelf themselves and found a book of interest. Following this they returned to me to discuss their choice. I asked questions for them to think through their choice of literature: *Was the content or cover most important when choosing a book? How is this book's level compared to the Read me! book they read? Do you see yourself being able to read this book?* The following books were chosen to read: *Great Expectations*, *The Lahti File*, *The Promise*, *The boy in Striped Pajamas*, *River God*, *Riders of The Purple Sage*, *Amy* (Sweet Dreams series by Liz Elwes), *Gateway from Hell*, *Blitz* and *Lucy* (Sweet Dreams series by Liz Elwes).

5.6 Data Analysis

Marshall and Rossmann (1999:150) state “Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and interpretation to the mass of collected data”. Interpretation must always be fair, reasonable and transparent. This way the process of interpretation also becomes a way of securing a certain level of validity.

The data in this study comprised of two sets of interviews with learners, an interview with their teacher, and observations during the ER-intervention period. The strategy for analyzing the data, gleaned meaning from them, could have followed many tracks or paths. I chose to follow what Kvale (1996), with a reference to Giorgi (1975), calls “meaning condensation”. Malterud (2012:795) calls the same approach “text condensation” and states, “The method offers the novice researcher a process of intersubjectivity, reflexivity and feasibility, while maintaining a responsible level of methodological rigour”.

I compared and themes both against each other with the goal of refining them, but also against the research questions and overall “tone of voice” in the interview. Practically speaking, meaning, or text, condensation happens through a reductionistic approach starting with steps where text is scrutinized with the intention of stripping away words that do not carry or lead up to meaningful statements. Typically, these are “filler-words” in sentences. Words that are only there to bring balance to the sentence, but which in themselves does not describe or hint at the real meaning stated by the informant. Once the filler-words are taken out, what is left are words, or fragments of sentences, that carry the real meaning of what was being said. Within this approach these are called “themes” (van Manen, 1990).

During the analysis thematic representations of the experiences the learners had with reading, became apparent. Examples of reoccurring themes: *reluctance towards reading* (boring, I do not read my homework), *low self-esteem regarding reading skills* (it is difficult, I am a slow reader, I am not good in English), *technology over books* (I read facebook, blog, online news), and *Lack of motivation* (no adults inspires me to read). With this approach, I was able to explore and get a better overview of the data that was gathered during this study, and at the same time gain new insights into the learners’ experiences with reading, and why they, over time, had become reluctant readers.

Using meaning condensation as the analytical approach gave me a practical and

tangible tool with which I could approach my data. But, more than that, it also helped me question the themes that sprung out of the initial analysis, and with that came another layer of validative questioning and reasoning.

5.7 Validity and reliability

Within the qualitative research tradition, some have chosen to disregard the notion of validity and reliability all together arguing that such principles primarily belong in the positivistic traditions. Salner (1989) counters this by claiming that this is both a tactical and logical misconception as the criteria of validity and reliability must also apply to qualitative research, although perhaps with different connotations and content compared to the positivistic tradition.

Validity is normally understood as a measure of how well a particular study answers the research questions raised. Hammersley (1990:57) puts it this way: “By validity, I mean truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers”. Kvale (1989:78) expands on Hammersley by stating that: “(...), validation involves checking the credibility of knowledge claims, of ascertaining the strength of the empirical evidence and the plausibility of the interpretations”.

In this study, validity is addressed by being transparent on both the research design, how it is constructed to fit with the research questions, how the analysis is carried out and finally to what degree the results and conclusions are coherent with the theories and empirical data. Triangulation as a validation tool has been used in two ways. Firstly, to mirror interview data from the pupils with data from the interview with the teacher and my own observations. Secondly, I have tested the cross-interview themes that became apparent through the analysis process, back against bigger sections of the interviews of both pupils, the teacher and my observations.

Reliability may not hold the same prominent position as validity in qualitative research. It is normally understood as the trustworthiness of the data and the process of gathering them. The key question will normally be this: If another person did the same study, using the same methods, will they get the same results? Because much of qualitative research recognizes the social element to the research process one would

normally agree that the offered conclusion is one among several and, hence, the criteria of reliability is only perceived relevant if the same person did the same study using the same methods. In other words, if one accepts that the researcher comes with their perspectives and understandings, one must include the researcher as a factor in the research. Only then does it make sense to talk about reliability in qualitative research.

In this project I tried to improve reliability by doing a test-interview with the semi-structured interview guide. The idea was to try to uncover any unclear or ambiguous questions. I also discussed the interview guide with fellow master-students and my supervisor to make sure that the questions were understood the same way by everyone. To improve the reliability of my data even further, I made the decision to conduct the interviews in Norwegian. Again, the purpose was to make sure that the respondents understood the questions the same way, and by that minimizing the chance of errors in understanding due to having to listen and answer to the questions in English.

5.8 Ethical considerations

The teacher gave information about the project to potential participants. When the participants accepted to participate in the study, a *letter of consent* was handed out to each of the participants. The participants were informed that the information given would be confidential and anonymous.

The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) is a national resource centre servicing the research community and students. Its main objective is to secure easy access to data for the research community. A notification form is to be used for projects that are subject to notification under the Personal Data Act, and therefore a notification form was sent to NSD to notify about this research project.

The study could not take place until one received a response from NSD. However, since there was no sensitive information gathered or published in this project, NSD's response was that the project did not have to obtain an approval, as anonymous data contains no information that may identify an individual, neither directly nor indirectly. Nevertheless, seeing that the participants are under the age of 18 they were given a *letter of permission* asking for the learners' and their parents' consent for participating in this project.

This was in accordance to The Norwegian Social Science Data Services directives:

The person requested to participate in the research project must understand what the consent is concerning and what the consequences of participation will be. It is common to formulate an information letter that includes an inquiry regarding participation and information about the project.¹⁹

¹⁹ http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/en/notification_duty/consent.html

6. Results

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews with ten Norwegian lower secondary learners of English. An interview guide was used through interviews as a tool to obtain relevant information of the learners' experience. The aim was to collect information on individual perspectives and experiences of reading, primarily in English, through one-to-one semi structured interviews. A pre-interview was conducted prior to the ER program intervention, as well as a post-interview after. In addition, an interview was conducted with their teacher after the intervention. The observation of the ER program intervention is discussed. The two research questions for this study are.

- How did a group of Norwegian lower secondary school EFL learners describe their experiences with reading in English?
- How did the learners experience an intervention adopting key principles from ER?

6.1.1 Results presented by themes

The interviewer translated the pupils' responses from Norwegian into English. The responses from the participants were gathered to identify common, recurrent or emergent themes. Some themes became apparent across the interviews and the most common ones are presented in this chapter. In the pre-interview the following themes became apparent: *Facebook - the primary source of reading, Learners' lack of inspiration towards reading, I am not that good in English, I read the textbook, Reading is difficult, Reading is boring, and It is important to have a knowledge of the English Language.* In the post-interview the following responses were the most common: *I based my choice on the book's cover, I read a couple of pages, No time to read, No one showed an interest, and Reading without any tasks related to it is better- but I do not have to do it.*

Due to low language skills in both Norwegian and English, the responses from a 10th grade Lithuanian girl were too poor to be analyzed and included in the results. Both pre- and post-interviews conducted with the Lithuanian girl are not taken into consideration in the analysis and results. Even though the questions were explained thoroughly in both Norwegian and English, her responses were either: no response, but with the use of hand gestures and facial expressions that displayed “I don’t understand”, or simply: “yes”. The response “yes” was also given when asked to name the last book she read. This suggests that the comprehension of both languages was too low for participating in this study. This is interesting with regard to the challenges an EFL teacher encounters when teaching in a mixed ability classroom where there are learners with poor language skills in both Norwegian and English. However, for the purpose of this study the interview with this pupil is not relevant to use in the analysis, as the interview is not representative for this group of Norwegian lower secondary school EFL learners. Hence, the analysis and results of nine interviews will be presented.

6.2 Pupils’ pre-intervention interviews

The interview guide for the pre-interviews consisted of questions set out to gain knowledge of these Norwegian EFL learners’ experiences and their opinions on reading.

Facebook - the primary source of reading.

The first three questions in the interview guide concentrated on identifying the participants’ reading experiences. The first question consists of three parts. 1. *Do you read outside school?* 1a. *What types of texts do you read?* 1b. *Why do you read them?* The participants did not give elaborated answers, but gave for the most part one-word answers. For example, when asked if they read outside of school (question 1), all of the participants replied simply “no”. Only one of the nine participants reported reading books. The participants were then informed that it did not necessarily mean reading a book, but reading in general, any text. Most of them then answered *Facebook* as their primary source of reading. Additional questions were asked in order for the participant to elaborate on their answers. A follow-up question to 1a asked was: *What do you read apart from Facebook?* The majority answered: “Sometimes I read the news.” Also, two of the participants reported reading a blog named “mammatilmichelle.blogg.no” which is a blog written by a teenage mom. The blog discusses

matters such as a young mother's challenges, fashion, make-up and baby products. Two participants reported reading printed text in which the reading material consisted of fashion magazines, cartoons in newspaper, and reading for the purpose of gaining a tractor license. Only a few participants chose to elaborate on why they chose to read the texts. "I am interested in this, to read about celebrities and the latest news in the fashion industry is interesting". These answers mainly relate to reading in Norwegian, and it was necessary to ask additional questions to what they read in English. Only four participants reported reading in English, such as English quotes on Facebook, and six reported reading their English assignments.

Learners' lack of inspiration towards reading

Questions 2-4 in the interview guide aimed to explore if anyone in close relation to the participants had encouraged them to read. Surprisingly, only one participant reported having parents who encouraged reading. However, all but two participants reported parents reading books, for the most part their mother.

Regarding the question if a teacher had inspired them to read a book, elaborated answers were given. Some participants reported watching a movie (based on the book) first. The participants also reported that they experienced the book to be interesting as they recognized (from the movie) the characters in the book. They reported this being in contrast to the experience of reading a book with "unfamiliar" characters and settings. In addition, reading the book was reported as a positive experience as the book contained more details (than the movie), which "gave a different portrayal of the story". The other participants simply answered "no", whereas one participant added: "I do not read my homework". I can only speculate on why this comment was added as the question asked was aimed at gaining information if the teacher had inspired the participants to read.

The participants' recollections of reading activities varied greatly (question 4). Some reported not remembering any activities from grade 1-7, others remembered activities that they found to be fun, whereas some remembered activities to be both challenging and demotivational. One of the fun activities was role-play. The participants experienced this as fun as it was group work, an interactive activity, and they could to some extent choose character, topic and dialogue. Also, another fun activity was exchanging letters with learners at another school in the area. Most of the participants also experienced a reading competition where they earned a ticket for every page read as fun. The motivational factor was getting the most tickets. Interestingly, the pleasure of reading the book or its content was not mentioned as a

variable for the reading experience to be regarded as “fun”. However, there was one participant with quite the contrary experience after the reading competition, who reported that the reading competition resulted in losing the interest for books. Prior to the reading competition, the participant read for enjoyment, but after the competition, where the focus was reading fast to gain tickets, the interest declined.

I am not that good in English

Learners are often given tasks and homework (both in writing and reading) with an expectation of being able to answer questions in connection with it. Question 5 and 5a aimed at getting a better understanding of the participants’ confidence in reading aloud and/or responding to teachers’ questions in class. In addition, the aim was to explore if the participants were comfortable with being asked questions regarding their homework. Replies included: “I hope I read it correctly”, “I do not want to make any reading mistakes”, “I am a slow reader”, “I am not that good in reading out loud”, “I do not like to read in foreign languages as I am afraid I will mispronounce it” and “I do not read that well”. However, some simply replied: “It is ok”. One added that reading was okay, but that giving a presentation in front of the class was uncomfortable. In contrast to the reported low self esteem related to speaking and reading out loud in class, seven of the participants did not mind reading if asked.

I read the textbook

The participants’ last reading activity (question 6) was for the most part reported as being their textbook from school. Some read the textbook in class or at home as homework, which suggests that they did not read for enjoyment, but for school purposes. The current textbook story was about Inuits and was first introduced to the participants by showing a movie, which they experienced as fun and interesting. Two participants reported: “The teacher told me to read a book”, where one reported it not being interesting, whereas the other found a part of the book to be interesting: “I found it exciting when the lady got knocked down.” Facebook and reading English lyrics were also mentioned as the last reading activity encountered.

Reading is difficult

When asked if they liked reading in English (question 7), some responded, “It depends what type book”, “I have never completed reading a book”, “not really”, “No” and “I sometimes enjoy reading football magazines”. Furthermore the majority said that they found

English to be difficult. By difficult they meant: “I am not that good in reading English”, “I use Google translator when reading” and “I don’t like to get homework”.

Reading is boring

The majority of the participants responded positive to question eight; *Would you like to read a book in English?* On the other hand, three of the participants were not that positive toward reading a book in English, as their responses were: “I would rather like to read at school”, “It depends which one” and “It is difficult to choose a book”. These participants responded similarly in question 9 on how they feel about spending free time reading in English. The responses were: “I have never done that before”, “It depends which book”, and “I only read magazines, not books”. However, the majority of the participants replied the same with regard to reading a book: “It’s boring”.

It is important to have knowledge of the English Language

The participants did not complete reading their book to more desirable activities. However, reflecting on the importance of reading in English, each and every one of the participants viewed reading in English as important for the purpose of traveling and in job-related issues. Furthermore, they believed that reading promotes writing and reading skills: “It is important to have a good knowledge of English in order to read English letters, and when going abroad”, “It will improve vocabulary, writing skills and important when applying for a job” and “English is important when reading online and reading manuals”.

6.3 Observation during the ER intervention

The purpose of analyzing and evaluating the observation of the ER program is to identify what factors the participants based their choice of books on, utterances regarding reading that were not displayed during the interview, and identifying their attitude when choosing a book and their interaction with peers. The observation is important as one experience their behavior and collects data on naturally occurring behavior within their usual context. The aim of the observation was to examine how they were making choices in order to understand the factors contributing to the participant choosing a book, and also if the participants were acting in contrast to what they responded in the interview. According to with Marshall and Rossmann

(1999), focused observation, usually used to check analytic themes, is used at later stages in the research process.

The observations focused on the learners' behavior when choosing a book. The learner's body language, how the learner acted toward the interviewer and interaction with their peers were observed. This was to see if a learner chose a book based on what was expected by the interviewer, the peer or the learner's own choice. The observation took place four times. First, during the pre-interview; secondly, when choosing the first book; thirdly, four days after the participants' pre-interview when selecting another book to read; and lastly when returning the book to the interviewer during the post-interview.

After the one- to -one interview, the participants chose a book from the *Read me!* selection and were to read it within four days. After four days, I met with the participants in the library, where they (one- to- one) returned the book and gave feedback on the book they had just read. This was important, as I needed to know if the participants found their book of choice to be too easy, easy, or difficult, and also if the topic was interesting or not. Four participants reported the *Read me!* book they had chosen to read was too easy, one reported the book being "super easy", two reported easy and the last two reported the reading being at an "ok" level. There were no correlations to the book being level 1, 2 or 3 and the way they experienced the book. The information from the participants provided me with useful information I needed in order to help the participants in choosing a book from the graded readers selection from the schools' library. For example, if *Read me!* level 3 was reported being too easy, read quickly and the topic was found to be boring, I could guide the learner when choosing a book from the school library. The book should be a topic of interest and not too difficult.

When choosing a book in the school library, the participants were told to look at the cover, read the back of the book, and also look inside at font sizes and illustrations used in order for them to choose a book of interest and appropriate level. The participants chose a book and consulted me for feedback on what seemed to be the "right" level. The appropriate level in this sense was based on the interview with the participant as well as their feedback on the *Read me!* book. Interestingly, some of the participants consulted their peers, and as a consequence the choice of book was based on a peer's opinion. For example, participant 5 reported the *Read me!* Level 2 book *The Viking Family* to be "super easy", and she chose *Illustrated Mum*, which is a 222 page children's novel, as her second book to read. Her

interest and reported reading speed from *The Viking Family* indicated that this was the “right level” book and that she could enjoy reading throughout the next three weeks. However, she changed her mind after talking to peers and chose *Blitz*, which is part of the Sharp Shades 2.0 series with only 64 pages. She did not complete reading this book, due to the fact that she experienced it as “boring”. Also, one participant could not find any books of interest. The participant in question had earlier reported an interest in “facts”. Taking this into consideration we discussed various books in the library and chose a book from Macmillans readers: *Riders of The Purple Sage*, which is to a degree history-related.

The levels of the chosen books varied a great deal. They discussed their reason for choosing the book with me before leaving the library. The main reason given at the time was the cover of the book. The second most reported reason for how they chose a book was the type of book, in particularly short books about facts. Some participants reported choosing the book based on the fact that they had read the book before. One participant based the book of choice on that she had seen the movie. Another reason given for choosing a book was that a peer advised them to read that particular book.

6.4 Pupils’ post-intervention interviews

The questions in the post-interview set out to gain insight into the learners’ experiences with the ER intervention. The interview guide consisted of three main parts: how they experienced “free choice” of books, experienced encouragement and interest from others, and self-evaluation of the benefits and challenges of reading English books.

I based my choice on the book’s cover

Question 2 was asked with the purpose of gaining an understanding of why the participants made the choice of the particular book from the ER library. One reported reading the blurbs and found *Gateway to Hell* interesting. Another participant reported that the choice was made purely out of interest and chose *Zlatan*, as his interest is football. The book *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* had been discussed in class, followed by watching the movie. Hence, one participant reported recognizing the book cover and chose this book, as it sounded “fun”. The other participants rated the book because of its cover or by the recommendation of a peer.

I read a couple of pages

Except for one participant, all the participants reported the book being interesting to some

extent. “The book was okay”, “The level was okay”, “It was okay, interesting”, “The book was fine, a bit too easy”, and “Okay in the beginning, but it was too long”. Despite these utterances, none of the participants completed reading their book. Furthermore, half of the participants only read 3-10 pages of the book.

No time to read

When asked why they did not complete their book (question 3b), the responses varied. Two participants’ responses were “I do not like to sit still” and “It was too difficult”. Furthermore, one participant gave an elaborated answer: “I do not have the patience to read. For Norwegian texts I read 10 pages at a time, but I do not read if there are not tasks related to the reading”. The rest of the participants reported not having time to read. Variables explaining the lack of time were: sport activities, work, a Christmas school project and homework.

No one showed an interest

The participants were under the age of 18, and at least one of the parents of each participant had signed a “Letter of Consent” prior to the intervention. For question 4 and 5 only one participant experienced parents asking questions related to the book and the project. The significance is that the parents knew about the project but did not, according to the participants, get involved. Only one participant experienced the teacher asking questions related to the choice of book.

Reading without any tasks related to it is better – but I do not HAVE to do it.

Question 6 set out to gain insight into the participants’ experiences. The majority reported that they enjoyed being able to choose a book. They reported that they enjoy reading more if it is not set as a requirement, as they can read for pleasure and not look for details. However, four of the participants added: “If there are no tasks, then we do not have to read”. One participant reported that tasks must be related to the reading for him to do the reading. “If there are no tasks, then I do not have to do it. Then there is no motivation”. Two participants added, “At least we do not have to write a book report” and “I do not like to read English out loud in class”.

New vocabulary

Question 7 was designed with the intention to examine the participants’ self-evaluation of what they had gained from the reading project. Despite some of the participants reading 3- 10 pages of their book, six of the participants reported gains in English proficiency: “Yes, my

English is better. It is more fun”, “I looked up new words”, “I learned new vocabulary”, and “Yes, I also found reading in English more fun than prior to the project”. One participant reported: “I discovered that I have to read more in order to improve my skills.”

I had a selection of books to choose from

The participants were to explain what parts of the ER project they enjoyed the most. One participant reported not enjoying the intervention, as he does not like to read. Another participant reported that the best part of the ER program was that there were not any book reports to be made. The rest of the participants emphasized that they enjoyed it as they had a selection of books to choose from. Furthermore, that a wide range of different genres within their level gave them the opportunity to read “books with different vocabulary” and also “I can work my way up the levels”. One participant said that she enjoyed the selection of books but moreover that I was there to discuss choice of books with her.

Yes, I would like to read more books in English

Taken into consideration that none of the participants completed reading their book, the responses given in the last question were unexpected. Two participants said that they did not want to read another book, whereas the rest said they would read more English books if they could choose the book to read.

6.5 Teacher interview

The teacher interview was conducted in the teacher’s office with only the teacher and the interviewer present. I found it necessary to conduct the interview with the teacher after the post-interviews with the learners. By conducting it after the interviews with the learners I could alter the questions in the interview guide to be relevant to some of the findings from the interviews with the learners (participants). This was to see if there were any correlations or discrepancies between the teacher’s views and the learners’ experiences. Hence, the questions are based on general questions regarding the teacher’s views on reading, the responses from the learners, and the observation during the ER intervention.

The interview guide consisted of seven main questions, with sub-questions related to the main questions. The teacher was informed that the name of the school and the teacher’s name would not be revealed, as this was an anonymous study. Furthermore that the aim of the

interview was to explore the teacher's views on the learners' attitudes toward reading, methods used, and which of them seemed beneficial. The teacher did not have any prior knowledge of the questions in the interview guide. Consequently, the responses given were not prepared in advance. I asked questions and wrote the ongoing responses from the teacher. In addition, a tape recorder was used during the interview for the purpose of being able to replay the interview for clarification and validating the dialogue between interviewer and teacher. The interview was not transcribed but responses of relevance to the research questions are cited.

In question 1 the teacher was asked to express her own views on Norwegian learners' reading skills. The teacher was first informed of an article in Stavanger Aftenblad (2013), where the article stated that only one 9th grade class in Stavanger had reached their national goal in reading score. The first response was of her astonishment to the low scores, and the teacher listed some reasons for possible explanations for the low results. "Those tests are rather difficult and I think that lot of the questions are, or that methods used are a bit different from the ones they are used to". The teacher added that the methods used in classrooms were not aimed at the national tests. Secondly, "The reading materials in the textbook are too few and too short. So, the learners are not getting enough practice in reading comprehension". This is interesting as the third possible explanation was that the learners often indicate the texts being too difficult, which might result in the English teacher using L1 language in the classroom. "Maybe the teacher translates too easily". A follow up question was asked: *Does this imply that the texts in Norwegian textbooks aimed at L2 learners of English are too short or too difficult to comprehend for the level they are aimed at?* The teacher's conclusion for the low scores was due to "the learners are not reading enough".

The next question in the interview guide was not related to the teacher's view on factual test results or performance of lower secondary school learners, but the view on how the teacher experiences the learners' attitudes toward reading in English: *LK06 puts a lot of emphasis on reading, and learning objectives for all pupils. In a mixed ability class what is your impression of the attitudes towards reading in English?* The teacher indicated that the learners are finding the texts too difficult, and elaborated "They tell me it's boring, but I think the main reason is that they find it too difficult". Furthermore, in answer to the question: *What could be a reason/factors for some learners enjoying to read while others are struggling?* The teacher emphasized the experience of reading in mother tongue (L1) as being important for the development of reading skills in L2. "They have a better chance to do well in reading in

L2 language if they do well in L1 language”. The teacher repeatedly reported the reading being too difficult, and especially when the learners had to read authentic English texts.

I gave the learners’ an authentic text last week, and one learner did not do the task.

When asked why she was doing something else, she replied: “I don’t learn anything in the classroom.” She wanted to take the text home and look up the words.

The teacher was given a follow-up question: *In your opinion is there a gap in what is being taught in the classroom and what the learners are expected to learn?* She did not answer this question in the sense that she confirmed that there was a gap, yet it was stated indirectly: “They are just struggling with it and I think the main reason is that they should do a lot more reading”.

Other factors in the teacher’s response regarding the fact that some pupils enjoy reading while some are struggling were the learners’ attitudes toward reading and the home environment “At home, what parents motivate you to do. For example, if parents encourage you and you start reading in your mother tongue you will do better in reading in a second language and you will start reading, I think”. Furthermore she stated, “If you struggle with reading, you will avoid reading”.

To question 3, the teacher agreed that teachers could promote positive reading attitudes and explained some of the methods used to increase learners’ interest in reading books. “Talking about books, reading extracts from books, giving them time in class to read, helping them find suitable books to read at the correct level. Also, giving them the chance to read for pleasure, meaning no questions asked”. A follow up questions was asked: *Did any of the methods work better on some students than others? If so, which?* The teacher stated: “The topic is of importance, and also the purpose of reading; is it reading for comprehension or reading just for fun? Such as extensive reading, reading for fun is better”. In answer to the question about the main challenges for a teacher, the teacher replied:

It is their attitude and getting them started. That is hard. Some of them do not want to read. They say it is too boring, too difficult and the learners say that reading at home is not possible, that it is too time consuming. And they report this in both in L1 and L2.

Question 4 set out to find out if the teacher had any prior knowledge to ER. The teacher had knowledge to ER prior to the project and believed that a long-term focus on ER would be

beneficial to the learners. However, there were some challenges implementing it and the main obstacle was time. “The learners have so much to learn and the teachers have to make plans and chose what to focus on. We focus on the textbook ”. The teacher explained that handouts with authentic texts had been provided for the learners several times, but that there was less use of handouts now because the learners complained. “It was too many handouts for them to glue into their book”. Concerning the teacher’s view on how to implement it, even though the learners are somewhat reluctant to it, the response was: “It’s being willing to give it priority. We seem to focus on textbook texts.” A follow-up question was asked: *Do you find it difficult to break away from textbook?* The teacher said: “I do it, but we have to cover the curriculum. It also seems like the learners prefer the textbook. It seems safer for them”. Another follow-up question was asked: *Did they learn more when you implemented extensive reading?* The teacher took some time before responding: “If they read, it it’s beneficial, but if they miss chapters they lose interest and motivation - then it’s better to have shorter texts”.

Question 5 set out to find out if any of the learners in this project talked to the teacher about their book of choice or this project in general. However, the teacher’s response was that no one had approached her asking questions, or informing her about either their book choice or this project in general. The teacher only got information from the pupils when asking direct questions. She reported that the pupils then reported enjoying the project. “But I am their English teacher so I do not see them every day, but when I asked them, they liked it actually”.

The researcher said: *In their interview, most of them answered that more reading would be beneficial for them in terms of better knowledge when traveling abroad or when applying for a job. However, many of them did not finish their book. Why do you think they see the benefits, but they seem careless to achieve it?* The teacher answered: “Maybe because they were told to read at home. They realize it is beneficial but they are not willing to spend the time. They feel there is too much homework and tests. They prioritize other activities.”

The researcher asked another follow up question: *The learners acknowledge that they can get a better job if their literacy skills are good, yet they chose not to read a book. Why do you think this is?* After some consideration, the teacher replied: “They read more relevant things. Like blogs and facebook”. “A book is a book, maybe it would have been more motivating if the book was available to read online”.

Question 6 was as follows: *They also reported that the only reading they did, in both their own language and English was on Facebook, on a Blog, and homework- textbooks. What do you think is the reason for this?* The teacher reported that she felt that the society is one of the reasons as to why the pupils do not read a lot of books: “Reading is not popular

these days. The ones that need it the most do not do it. They just do not read. That is the way the society has become, reading is not popular”.

Question 7 was an open-ended question for the teacher to add information that was not already touched upon in the interview. The teacher explained what her thoughts were as regard to increase reading motivation for her future pupils:

I would like to start a project in 5th grade with extensive reading. Provide the pupils with proper books to read and as part of their regular homework. Read 10-15 minutes a day. Just reading for pleasure. This has to be well planned, and followed through continuous over the years.

In conclusion, the teacher’s responses to the questions suggest that the teacher experienced the learners to be reluctant and not motivated to read, and that it was a result of the learners not reading enough. She also implied that reading extensively would improve their reading skills. Therefore, she would like to introduce the learners to ER at an earlier age, as she believes this would benefit the learners.

7. Discussion

Two research questions have shaped this study:

- How did a group of Norwegian lower secondary school EFL learners describe their experiences with reading in English?
- How did the learners experience an intervention adopting key principles from ER?

This chapter discusses the main findings in relation to the two research questions. The first section, 7.1, briefly gives an overview of the thesis. The discussions are presented in five sections presenting re-occurring themes. The learners' literacy experiences prior to this study are discussed in section 7.2, and section 7.3 discusses the learners' current reading practices. In section 7.4, the learners' experiences of the ER intervention are analyzed, followed by their views on the importance of reading in English and their motivation in section 7.5. The researcher's observations and teacher's reflection on the learners' utterances are discussed in section 7.6 and the final section 7.7 is a summary of the discussion.

7.1 Introduction

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with a group of Norwegian EFL learners in secondary school to investigate the learners' experiences with reading in English as a foreign language. To gain a broader picture of the learners' experiences with reading, they were also asked questions about reading in their mother tongue.

The first research question seeks to provide insight into a group of young adults' reading experiences throughout their childhood as well as their current habits toward reading in English. This was explored by conducting a pre-interview. The second research question relates to the learners' reading experiences of an ER intervention and was investigated through semi-structured post-interviews. Furthermore, the teacher had been teaching EFL for several years and was therefore interviewed on issues concerning secondary school EFL learners' scores on national tests, the learners' reading practices, and how reading is/should be

taught in school. Similarities emerged in the responses from the interviews with the learners, and certain themes became apparent across the interviews. The recurrent themes are discussed in the following sections.

7.2 The learners' past literacy experiences

Learners' lack of inspiration towards reading

The majority of the learners reported that they did not experience involvement by parents or the teacher during the ER project. Literacy practices at home have shown to have an impact on the learners' proficiency in reading (Grainger, 2004). Teale (1986) supports this and states that an important factor in children's progress in reading is adult-child literacy interaction. Interestingly, only one participant reported having experienced his parents encouraging him to read when he was a child. Despite lack of encouragement, the majority reported that their parents read books occasionally, in particular their mother. In addition, some of the learners reported their siblings reading. However, the responses on home literacy practices indicate that the group of learners in this project had not been exposed to adult-child literacy interaction very often.

None of the participants completed the book they chose to read in this project. This may be due to their level of proficiency in English, lack of inspiration or lack of exposure to books. However, several factors might have influenced the participants in reporting that their parents did not encourage them to read. The participants might have another definition of reading than the interviewer, for example that they associated reading with reading a book and not other texts. Maybe parents have encouraged them to read magazines or news articles during their childhood, but the learners did not inform of this possibly because the parents did not encourage *books*. The learners' definition of "encourage" may also be a factor. Parents might have asked: Would you like to read the book I got you? Where the parents are trying to encourage reading. The learner, on the other hand, does not experience this as encouragement or inspiring but as a simple yes or no question. Another factor is that they may also be focusing on encouragement in the present time and not their childhood.

Elley (1984) points out that a possible factor for second language learners' weaknesses could be due to lack of exposure to written material. In order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between home literacy and the children's level of proficiency in reading, it is important to explore the materials children are exposed to (Teale,

1986). The participants did not elaborate on what their relatives were reading and it would have been interesting to gain an insight as to what kind of reading material the participants have been exposed to, for example if the reading material includes newspapers, hard cover books, magazines, or pocket books. Moreover, what genre is being read and if the readers at home read books for pleasure or for work purposes.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory on Zone proximal development (ZPD) implies that parent-child interaction could benefit literacy development. Parents can help the child become acquainted with one book more advanced than the other as the child develops and improves his/her reading skills. The process from picture books, reading storybooks, letting the children "read" by themselves, to introducing age and level appropriate books. This is similar to the competence aim in *LK06*, which sets specific competence objectives after year 2, 4, 7, and 10. The objectives after seventh grade in the English subject curriculum explicitly state that pupils in eighth grade and up should be able to read and understand texts of varying lengths and in various genres, and read and talk about English literature for children and young people from various media and genres, including prose and poetry. Another objective is the ability to express himself/herself creatively, inspired by English literature from various genres and media. These objectives are of relevance to the group of learners in this project. However, the learners reported not reading English texts, apart from textbook assignments and quotes on Facebook. It is therefore questionable if these learners are at the appropriate level in relation to the objectives in the English subject curriculum.

One of the questions in the interview guide aimed at exploring the participants' experiences of reading activities in the past. The learners reported remembering a few reading activities from primary school. Role-play, exchanging letters and "book reading competition" were three activities reported. Two of the activities are interactive activities. The learners experienced these activities as "fun", as opposed to someone telling them "learn this". The reading competition was an individual task-related activity. The learners received a ticket (reward) for every page they read, and this was also reported as "fun". The notion of fun in these activities could be rooted in a sense of accomplishment. Regardless of the level of proficiency, the learners could participate in the said activities. The common denominator here seems to be that the learning was not forced on the pupils, as such it may relate to Krashen's (1985) "acquisition" as subconscious process of learning. In contrast, one participant did not enjoy it and reported becoming less motivated to read books after her experience with the reading competition. This illustrates how important it is for a teacher to

use a variety of activities and didactical methods in a classroom to engage each individual learner.

7.3 The learners' current reading practices

Facebook - the primary source of reading

Only two participants reported reading printed texts in which the texts were purely out of interest, such as reading fashion magazines and cartoons in newspaper. One participant reported reading for practical reasons, as reading for the purpose of gaining a tractor driving license. Since these answers mainly concerned reading in Norwegian, it was necessary to ask additional questions to explore what they read in English. I got the sense that the participants felt they had to give a response to this question, as their reply did not seem very convincing. Four participants hesitantly reported reading English quotes on Facebook. This response might be due to the fact that the participants were not conscious of how many English texts they are exposed to daily. Six reported reading their English assignments.

Searching the World Wide Web, sending and receiving electronic mail (e-mail), being able to chat online and sending text messages is a vital part of literacy today, as this is how one socially interacts and communicates in our society today. Social interaction is important in developing reading skills as reading is affected by the various areas everyday life (Schieffelin and Cochran-Smith, 1984). Areas such as communication at home, school and work, how one is organizing life, leisure activities and social participation require reading skills. Social life has changed over the years through the use of computer technology (Thomas and Brown, 2011). Consequently, for many EFL learners in lower secondary school, daily activities are mediated by technological literacy. According to Hayles (2010:62), technological advancements are giving readers a new way of reading. "THE evidence is mounting: people in general, and young people in particular, are doing more screen reading of digital materials than ever before." This suggests that the very way one reads and writes is changing. Kern (2000:224) seems to agree, and claims that "reading and writing electronic text draws upon many of the same conventions used in printed text, but also involves acquiring additional conventions that are both procedural and conceptional in nature". For example Pressing PageUp and PageDown, scrolling to find essential information creating a fast pace reading.

As a consequence of increased use of computers, Hayles (2010) argues that there is a decline in reading printed books. Books are now being published as E-book – where one can view the printed version on screen. Nevertheless, Schugar et. al's (2013) state that they have some concerns regarding e-books as little research has been conducted on how learners read e-books, but concludes that a learner engage in reading e-books and that they find it motivation:

To prepare students for the digital reading demands they will face both in and out of school, teachers need to model strategies for e-reading, assist students in transferring traditional reading behaviors to electronic texts, and select high-quality interactive e-books that will scaffold students' reading. (Schugar et. al 2013:615-623)

Postcards are to some extent being replaced with the computer technology such as e-mails, blogging, Facebook or Twitter updates. All these changes create a new way of reading. However, Nunberg (1996) claims that there is a mistaken belief that technology will make the printed book and the industry of printed materials obsolete and marginalize the significance literature has to language and vice versa, he states the printed books will always be an important part in the “digital revolution”. Similarly, Guthrie (2008) suggests that the development of technical advancement and the unlimited access to the new technology such as phones, ipods and Internet takes away the focus from academic reading.

The participants' responses related to question 1 in the interview guide suggest that the participant's associate “read” with “reading a book”, as the participants reported not reading. Hence, the term “reading” seems to be indistinguishable from “reading a book”. This suggests that texts the participants are surrounded by on a daily basis, such as signs, labels, Facebook and reading the news are not regarded as reading. It is interesting to note that the learners' primary response was: Facebook. The fact that they read Facebook is not unexpected, but the fact that the only reading they first mention is reading Facebook was not expected. It seems as the only reading this group of learners do is on the Internet, as a couple of the learners also mentioned that they sometimes read the news online, comics and “mammatilmichelle.blogg.no”.

The technical advancements are also making their way into most Norwegian classrooms. This development contributes to a shift in the way learners are being taught how to read. The group of learners' reading behavior, primarily by use of Internet, is in accordance with research conducted by Norwegian Centre for ICT in Education in collaboration with

New Media Consortium (NMC). The NMC Horizon Project research resulted in a report which stated “ten trends have been identified as key drivers of technology adoptions in Norwegian schools for the period of 2013 through 2018” (2013)²⁰. It states, “Social media is changing the way people interact, present ideas and information, and communicate. According to the EU Digital Agenda Scoreboard, 2012, Norway ranks high with regard to Facebook use, as close to 60% of the population uses Facebook, and the country ranks third in Europe with regard to posting messages to social media sites. Educators, students, and even the general public routinely use social media to share current events, opinions, and articles of interest. 2) Education paradigms are shifting to include online learning, hybrid learning, and collaborative models. 3) People expect to be able to work, learn, and study whenever and wherever they want. 4) As the cost of technology drops and school districts revise and open up their access policies, it is becoming more common for students to bring their own mobile devices. A number of Norwegian county councils responsible for upper secondary education are now shifting to or considering various BYOD models; several governments are mandating that soon all classrooms must have wireless networks so that students can leverage their personal devices. 5) Openness — concepts like open content, open data, and open resources, along with notions of transparency and easy access to data and information — is becoming a value. 6) The abundance of resources and relationships made easily accessible via the Internet is challenging us to revisit our roles as educators. 7) New opportunities, like learning analytics, are driving deployment of interoperability standards for learning technologies. 8) There is a new emphasis in the classroom on more challenge based, active learning. 9) The world of work is increasingly collaborative, driving changes in the way student projects are structured. 10) Technology continues to profoundly affect the way Norwegians work, collaborate, communicate, and succeed”.

This research proves the importance of technology in our society. As a consequence of this technology, notebooks are replaced by computers, parents are receiving text messages regarding parenting meetings, parents have to e-mail the teacher instead of sending a note, teachers use interaction teaching methods such as the Smartboard, youtube, and App’s for grammatical exercises are employed. The changes in the technological advancements suggest that children and youths are experiencing a new type of literacy development than people growing up 25 years ago. Do people think about distinguishing between the grammatical differences in written and spoken language, or do some tend to write the way they speak? A

²⁰ https://iktsenteret.no/sites/iktsenteret.no/files/attachments/2013-technology-outlook-for-norwegian-schools_en.pdf

weak learner or a reluctant reader might find this a challenge if they do not understand the English semantics. Contributing factors are when young adults are using abbreviations or producing a new way of communication, such as in texting with mobile phones, using smiley face, or simply write: “I luv u”. Abbreviations and the use of signs can give false perceptions on how the English language is constructed.

7.4 The learners’ experience of the ER intervention

The group of learners was considered to be reluctant readers, as they had low motivation towards reading. Research on the extensive reading approach shows it to be beneficial for language learners (Elley and Mangubhai, 1983; Elly, 1984; Elley, 1991; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989) and struggling readers (Hauer, 2012; Schiefele et al., 2012). Furthermore, Day et al. (2011), Nygård (1976) and Simensen (1998) stress that in order for the learning to be pleasurable and beneficial the reading material must not be too easy or too difficult. Hence, the selection of books introduced to the participants was graded readers. I assumed that if the learner would choose a “right level” book, they would enjoy reading the book. It was of interest to investigate and observe how and why they chose that particular book to read.

I based my choice on the book’s cover

Hafiz and Tudor (1989) argue that the cover of the book is an important factor when pupils are choosing a book to read. In this group of learners there was a striking tendency to choose a book by its cover. However, one participant reported the book being too difficult, which implies that choosing a book only by its cover is not necessarily the best selection criteria.

I had a selection of books to choose from

The participants reporting that they enjoyed having a selection of books to choose from supports Bamford and Day (2002), Renadya and Jacobs (2002) and Simensen (1998) views on the importance of a wide selection of books with various levels and genres.

The selection in the schools library consisted of approx 50 books written especially for language learners and/or written for teenagers. Initially, more than five books per participant, consisting of various genres, seemed to be a sufficient selection of books. However, some of the cover illustrations were old. The lack of a wide selection of new books with visually attractive covers might have discouraged the learners to choose one particular

book, as the learners reported choosing a book based on the cover. In addition, it seemed as the selection lacked themes of interest. One participant said that she enjoyed the selection of books, but what she appreciated the most was that I was there to discuss choice of books with her.

Reading with no assignment

The group of learners reported that they enjoyed the fact that there were no tasks related to the reading. They did not have to write a book report, or have a presentation about the book. This suggests that the learners have a greater motivation if there are not assignments related to their reading.

7.5 The learners' views on the importance of reading in English and motivation

It is important to have knowledge of the English Language

Reflecting on the importance of reading in English, all of the participants viewed reading in English as important. They reported that one would benefit from good English skills when traveling and in job-related issues. Furthermore, they believed that reading promotes writing and reading skills. This correlates to Edwards (2009) and Holme (2004) view that advanced literacy skills are necessary in today's society.

In addition, all of the participants reported the book being interesting, to some extent, and at a manageable level of difficulty. However, the learners' view on the importance of the English language deviates from their actual behavior. The learners reported that they did not complete reading the book during the ER intervention due to either other activities taking priority, or that they simply did not like to sit down and read a book. A possible reason for such a discrepancy is that the learners only use the English language in the classroom (Nuttall, 2005). Despite the learners seeing the benefits of English language learning, they do not put an effort into learning it or increasing their English language skills. Similarly, the discrepancy between response and actual behavior also came across in the last question. Taken into consideration that none of the participants completed reading their book, the responses given in the last question were unexpected as the majority of the learners said they would read more English books if they could choose what book to read. In the light of clear information given to the participants of the project intentions, and considering the fact that the participants had three weeks to complete reading the book, I had not foreseen these results.

Although the participants were chosen for this research project on the grounds that they were considered reluctant readers, I did not anticipate the engagement toward reading a book to be this low. I had, however, anticipated that some of them were to choose a book at a level above their reading skills and that they had to choose another book during the intervention. However, none of the participants chose to exchange their book with another one. The findings underpins that the group of learners selected by their teacher were indeed reluctant EFL readers, and that they had difficulties in motivating themselves to read.

This is interesting and raises the question to why the participants did not complete the book if they found it interesting. Several factors can have led to this. Schick et al. (1992:153) point to internal factors such as the learner's home background, socioeconomic status, ethnic and cultural characteristics. Guthrie (2008) argues that low-motivated learners are more often motivated by external rewards than intrinsic motivation. This view supports the behavior of the group of learners in this study, as they do not seem to read for their own sake. Furthermore, Guthrie (2008:107) states: "Students who are motivated by external rewards tend to be less interested in schoolwork, do not push so much effort, and tend to blame others such as their teachers when they are not successful". This is similar to McClelland's (illustrated in Nygård, 1976:311) model on achievement and motivation that implies that without a certain level of self-efficacy, the learner will not get a sense of accomplishment which leads to low motivation. According to Guthrie (2008), internal motivation decreases from age nine. He states that most pupils in first to fourth grade enjoy reading, but after fourth grade some pupils start to change their mind about reading and that in 8th grade the overweighing views on reading is that they "(...) agree with the statement, "I think reading is boring" Guthrie (2008: 111). This is in compliance with the findings in this study.

Reading is boring

It was not unexpected that the majority of the participants replied: "It's boring", when asked if they liked reading books, as the group of learners were considered reluctant readers. As "boring" is a broad term that may entail several meanings, I found it necessary to further explore what the learners may actually mean when they say that "reading is boring"..

One participant said that it is boring to "sit still", which suggests that boring for this participant did not necessarily have anything to do with reading a book in English, but that a *passive activity* is not interesting.

Another participant said that it was boring because it was difficult. Boring here has a different meaning; it is not boring simply because it is not a fun activity, but boring in the

sense that reading is a challenge. Some learners elaborated on the reading being experienced as difficult. They reported that they do not read well, that they are a slow reader, or not proficient enough in English. The learners' teacher interprets the learners' response that reading is *boring* in the sense that the reading is difficult due to low level of proficiency. Boring might also be used in occasions when the participants value friends and/or team activities more than reading. They rather spend spare time with friends than reading.

Last, another possible definition for the utterance *boring* is the sense that the *reading material* is merely not of interest. With an abundance of media pushed at them from multiple channels and devices, reading may simply not make the list of interesting things to do.

7.6 The researcher's observation and teacher's reflection on the learners' utterances

The purpose of analyzing and evaluating the observation of the ER program was to identify what factors the participants based their choice of books on, utterances regarding reading that were not displayed during the interview, and identifying their attitude when choosing a book and their interaction with peers.

The levels of the chosen books varied a great deal. The learners discussed their reason for choosing the book with me before leaving the library. This correlates on the use of ER as a tool in helping the learners to choose literature adequate for their reading level (Day and Bamford, 2002:2). During the interviews, I experienced that the learners wanted to participate in the ER intervention, and that they would like to read a book in English. However, they did not mention any preferences as to what genre they were interested in. In the post Interview, they were asked why they chose that book in particular. The main reason given was the cover of the book. Second, short books about facts were of interest. Some also reported that their choice was based on having read the book before, and some selected the book as they had previously seen a movie that was based on that particular book. Also, a couple of the learners based their choice of book by the recommendation from a peer.

I observed the interaction with their peers, and some of the learners were not able to choose a book from the ER selection themselves, but relied on their peers' opinion. Also, when they chose one book of the *Read me!* selection, the peers discussed their choice with peers in the hallway, reflecting on how "easy" the book they had chosen was. One claimed he would finish it before leaving school that day, one girl said she would read it at home.

The teacher stated that the home environment is important when it comes to learning how to read, in terms of how much the parents read and if they encourage the learner to read. However, the teacher did not experience the pupils involving her, and neither of the parents got involved in this project. Interestingly, the learners did not remember anyone who had inspired them to read in the past, of course this could be the case of selective memory, but nevertheless they have no recollections of it.

The teacher stated that the learners are reluctant readers, and that she assumes that one factor is that they experience reading as difficult. I would argue that another factor is the technological developments and the use of Internet cause an educational change as there is a need to shift in focus on how languages are learned. This point of view is supported by Thomas and Brown (2011), who argues that there is a “new culture of learning” which “(...)requires a shift in our thinking about education.” Kern (2000) seems to agree as he claims that there has been a shift in perspective on the role and function of computers in language teaching. This suggests that there may be a gap between the generation of technology literacy and the textbook teaching might affect the process of learning how to read.

The teacher reported that the teachers at the school mainly used the textbook. In her point of view, the texts are too short and state that the reading does not encourage reading comprehension. This is in compliance with Drew (2004), Hellekjær (2007), Charboneau (2012) who argue that traditionally, in most Norwegian classrooms, reading assignments are extracts from the learners’ English textbooks as well as handouts by choice of the teacher or the English department at the school. The teacher considers an ER approach to be a useful tool in second language learning in Norway. The teacher also claims that time and resources are challenges for implementing an ER program. “Implementing and executing an ER program in a large class can be found to be challenging, but I would argue that the learners would enjoy and improve their reading. If the reading is too easy, they will be bored, and if it is too difficult they will be discouraged and neglect reading”. This shows how complex it is for teachers to plan, execute and achieve the aims in *LK06* and the national test. This also displays the complexity of examining learners’ experiences with reading in English and the opinions, attitudes and motivation that comes along with it if the readers are reluctant toward reading.

7.7 Summary of the discussion

The learners' experience of the ER intervention seems to be that they enjoyed the concept of choosing a book from a wide selection of books. Despite the fact that it is in contrast to their actual behavior (not reading the book), they say that they would like to read another book. The learners' shared view of reading was that improving reading skills in English would benefit them in terms of increasing English proficiency. Despite this view, the learners did not read very much. Unexpectedly, half of them read less than 10 pages.

Some of the learners acknowledged that they would benefit from reading, but stated that if reading is optional "I do not have to do it". This suggests that the cognitive and reasonable view on the importance of reading is present, but that the learners lack motivation, as they see the benefits of reading but still they neglect reading.

When it comes to lack of reading, one variable seems to be inspiration. The participants, equally boys and girls, reported that they did not read due to several reasons. Some reported that they felt unsecure when it comes to their English skills. Furthermore, both the learners and their teacher claimed that some of the learners found the reading difficult, both in terms of the use of textbook and authentic texts. There is a discrepancy between the teachers' assumption that the learners claim that reading is boring due to the level of difficulty, as the learners claimed that reading was boring due to the fact that they did not like to sit still, or that they enjoyed spending time with their friends instead of reading.

There may be a relationship between this group of learners' displayed reluctance toward reading and the parents' encouragement. The majority of learners reported experiencing their mother reading. It was therefore unexpected that the learners did not experience any interest from the parents during this reading project. In addition, they claimed that they did not receive any interest from the teacher either.

Their teacher claimed that the learners would read if the reading material was interesting and if the learners saw the purpose of it. This seemed to be in accordance with how the learners selected a book in the ER library, as they based their book of choice on how interesting they found the cover of the book.

The last reading activity they reported reading, prior to the reading intervention, was their textbook. However, a few pupils revealed in both interviews that they did not read their textbook either. The same tendency appeared in the ER intervention, when none of the learners completed reading their book. This suggests that the readers were reluctant readers.

7.8 Limitations of the study

Practical limitations

The limitations of the study are presented in this section, as an evaluation from the start of the process of choosing a topic for this thesis to the analysis of the interviews.

Time

Due to time constraint, the interviews and the intervention of the ER program took place four weeks prior to the end of the fall semester. Initially, the program was to last from September to December 2013. Another implication was that the teacher I contacted in June 2013. The teacher was on a sick leave from August to beginning of October. This deferred the process as one relied on the teacher for getting an approval from the principal as well as choosing participants. Secondly, the NSD application form was not sent to NSD for approval until October, and their reply was sent in the beginning of November. The short intervention program during the end of a semester might have influenced the learners' engagement in the project as tests, school play, and a busy Christmas preparation were all time-consuming, leaving less time for extensive reading.

Participants

The interviewer conducted the interviews without any prior knowledge of the participants, or their level of reading. The selection of participants was based on the teacher's recommendations. In retrospect, this might have been a disadvantage for the ER intervention as the "guiding" of choosing a book in the library might have been better if I had some prior knowledge of the participants' interest and reading level. Also, the extent of the participants' reluctance toward reading books was unknown. I believe that if I had possessed this knowledge, I could have assisted the individual learner better in terms of guiding them to the "right" level book (In both level of proficiency and the learner's interest.) On the other hand, the participants might have answered the questions differently if there was a teacher-student relationship, as compared to the interviewer- participant relationship. One learner was Lithuanian and had poor Norwegian and English skills, which made the interview challenging. Questions were explained in Norwegian and English, but the participant did not understand all the questions, and the answers given were short. This learner spent her

Christmas Holiday reading, but was not able to give elaborated answers in the post interview either. This participant's answers are excluded in this thesis.

Materials

Choosing a book at the “accurate” level was based on the learners' interests and their opinions on how easy/difficult the graded reader book they read from *Read me!* series. However, without any knowledge of the participants level, one could not give accurate advice in choosing a book. Thus, when a participant explained that the level in a graded reader book was “ok”, the observer explained that he could choose an easier book, seeing as the purpose was to read and enjoy the book, not to become discouraged due to the length of the book or the vocabulary. Nonetheless, some participants chose above their ability. This implies that there was no correlation between what level they assumed they were at, and the actual level of proficiency. This gap may have affected the reading experience.

Research method

The research method using one-on-one qualitative interviews might also be seen as a limitation itself, as one would have preferred more samples. The open-ended questions did not seem to encourage the learners to elaborate, as the provided answers were ambiguous and vague. Also, the learners might have misunderstood the questions. In hindsight, the interview guide could, even though it was piloted, have contained more possible additional questions for the participants to elaborate on. Also, it is likely that supplementing various methods, such as observation of lessons, focus-group interviews (tape recorded) and study of materials, such as the textbook, could have provided more insight into the learners' reading level, experiences, opinions, attitudes and motivation for reading. However, the lack of elaborated answers confirms that a questionnaire would not have been the appropriate research method for this small-scale study. The research method could also have consisted of in-class reading, where the researcher could have organized a larger selection on books, and facilitated a good reading environment. The researcher could also have conducted a test to get an insight into the learners' proficiency level in English as a foreign language.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

The aim of the study was to gain a better understanding of a group of lower secondary school EFL learners' experiences toward reading in English. The thesis further aimed to get insight into the learners' experiences on extensive reading as an alternative or additional way of learning a second language. PISA surveys and Norwegian national tests reports low reading scores for learners in lower secondary school. This raises an interesting question as to why the results are low despite the increased emphasis on reading in the curriculum.

The research questions were:

- How did a group of Norwegian lower secondary school EFL learners describe their experiences with reading in English?
- How did the learners experience an intervention adopting key principles from ER?

The findings show that the majority of the learners reported positive attitudes toward ER as a method in learning English as a foreign language. In addition, the learners reported that reading English books could increase their English proficiency skills. There was a clear tendency among the learners that *reading* is understood as *reading a book*. However, my overall impression related to the first research question is that the learners came to this project with few positive experiences with reading in English and they did not prioritize reading the book as they find reading to be unstimulating. One possible reason for this, I would argue, is a result of the advancements in technology. The learners are used to finding information fast, and everything is expected to move in a fast pace. Even Facebook is not fast enough, as some teenagers tend to use other applications to share information even faster. It also seems as the learners acknowledge the benefits of reading, but do not see the benefits useful in the present moment.

For the second research question it seemed as the teacher's views confirm the learners' experiences toward reading. The teacher reported that the learners lack motivation, and that the learners simply do not read books. However, the significance of this study is that the group of learners were positive toward reading more books in English if they given the

liberty to choose a book, as they experienced in this project. The teacher also suggests that an ER program intervention would be beneficial, and suggests that it may change their attitudes and motivation toward reading.

Still, it is not possible to generalize and draw conclusions based on responses from nine pupils and one teacher at one school. This research is based on a small-scale action research that cannot be used to generalize *as far as EFL learners' reading experiences in lower secondary are concerned*. The project would therefore have to be expanded with further studies in order to be able to provide more findings on the general situation of lower secondary EFL learners' experiences toward reading in English.

For this reason, there seems to be a growing need to elucidate the experiences of Norwegian EFL learners towards reading in English as a foreign language. We need a better understanding of the learners' experiences and how past reading experiences affect learners' opinions, attitudes and motivation toward reading in English is important. Measures need to be taken in the use of extensive reading in a Norwegian EFL classroom if further research in a Norwegian lower secondary school shows that reading extensively, with no tasks attached to it, will motivate EFL learners, increase their writing, reading skills, and promote learning. I would therefore suggest conducting further studies in how *LK06* takes into account the learners' motivation for learning.

I would argue that *LK06* primarily is taking a teacher's perspective and not a learner's perspective on learning. The *LK06* and national tests seem to be constructed for the teacher and government as the results are compared up against national requirements. Arguably, this does not promote differentiated learning, possibly in theory but not put into practice. The "grey zone" learners are an example of how the *LK06* overall goal towards differentiated learning cannot be said to be successful at this time.

Learning to read English has become a critical skill in our globalized society. EFL holds a yet to be realized potential to help young learners take their place as active participants in such a society. There is an urgency to further explore how approaches like extensive reading may be an enabling factor for learners who otherwise find themselves excluded at school and in a world where good English proficiency and high level of reading fluency are more important than ever.

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Appendices:

A: Letter from NSD

B: Letter of Consent - Learners

C: Letter of Consent - Teacher

D: Pre - Interview guide Norwegian

E: Post - Interview guide Norwegian

F: Teacher Interview guide

Appendix A

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES



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Postboks 2557 Ullandhaug
4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 06.11.2013

Vår ref: 36008 / 2 / AMS

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 22.10.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

<i>36008</i>	<i>Extensive Reading effects on attitudes toward reading in a Second language classroom in Norway</i>
<i>Behandlingsansvarlig</i>	<i>Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder</i>
<i>Daglig ansvarlig</i>	<i>Jena Habegger-Conti</i>
<i>Student</i>	<i>Laila Bacher Byberg</i>

Etter gjennomgang av opplysninger gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon, finner vi at prosjektet ikke medfører meldeplikt eller konsesjonsplikt etter personopplysningslovens §§ 31 og 33.

Dersom prosjektopplegget endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for vår vurdering, skal prosjektet meldes på nytt. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>.

Vedlagt følger vår begrunnelse for hvorfor prosjektet ikke er meldepliktig.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim

Anne-Mette Somby

Kontaktperson: Anne-Mette Somby tlf: 55 58 24 10

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Laila Bacher Byberg Gamleveien 42E 4315 SANDNES

Personvernombudet for forskning



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 36008

Personvernombudet kan ikke se at det i prosjektet behandles personopplysninger med elektroniske hjelpemidler, eller at det opprettes manuelt personregister som inneholder sensitive personopplysninger. Prosjektet vil dermed ikke omfattes av meldeplikten etter personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at man ved transkripsjon av intervjuer eller annen overføring av data til en datamaskin, ikke registrerer opplysninger som gjør det mulig å identifisere enkeltpersoner, verken direkte eller indirekte. Alle opplysninger som behandles elektronisk i forbindelse med prosjektet må være anonyme. Med anonyme opplysninger forstås opplysninger som ikke på noe vis kan identifisere enkeltpersoner i et datamateriale, verken direkte gjennom navn eller personnummer, indirekte gjennom bakgrunnsvariabler eller gjennom navneliste/koblingsnøkkel eller krypteringsformel og kode.

Based on the information we have received about the project, the Data Protection Official can not see that the project will entail a processing of personal data by electronic means, or an establishment of a manual personal data filing system containing sensitive personal data. The project will therefore not be subject to notification according to the Personal Data Act.

The Data Protection Official presupposes that when transcribing interviews, or when otherwise transferring data to a computer, one does not register any information that makes it possible to identify individuals, neither directly nor indirectly. All electronic processing of data in the project must be done anonymously. Anonymous information is defined as information that in no way can identify individuals in the data material, neither directly by name or social security number, indirectly through a combination of background information or a list of names referring to a reference number, or through an encryption formula and code.

Appendix B:

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

“Extensive reading effects in a Second language classroom in Norway”

Kjære elev,

Bakgrunn og formål

Jeg heter Laila B. Byberg, og er Master in Literacy student ved Universitetet i Stavanger. Jeg inviterer deg til å delta på et kort forskningsprosjekt om effektene metoden ”Extensive Reading” (ER) har på elevers leselyst i ungdomskolen. Hensikten med prosjektet er å få en bedre forståelse av ungdomskole elevers holdninger til lesing i Engelskfaget, og om holdninger endres ved bruk av metoden ER.

Prosjektet er anonymt og det vil ikke bli nevnt verken skole, lærer eller elever til andre. Verken Universitetet i Stavanger, kollegaer eller Masteroppgaven vil gi noe informasjon som kan spores tilbake til skolen og/eller elever. Ditt bidrag vil bli slettet etter avhandlingen.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Elevenes deltakelse.

1. Svare på utdelt spørreskjema hvor jeg får kartlagt litt mer info om elevens syn på lesing, hvor mye han/hun evt leser etc. Spørreskjema er på norsk.
2. Eleven velger bøker selv. Han/hun kan benytte skolens biblioteket, samt ”Graded Readers” som jeg anskaffer. Eleven skal lese hjemme. Han/hun velger selv hvor mange bøker de leser i en periode på 4-5 uker - men de får et skjema som de skal skrive ned hvilke bok han/hun har lest.
3. Etter 4-5 uker får han/hun et spørreskjema igjen som går på leselyst.

Det må hentes inn samtykke fra foreldre til de elevene som vil delta.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Jeg er underlagt taushetsplikt og ingen andre vil få tilgang til personidentifiserbare opplysninger.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes innen juni 2014, og prosjektet er meldt til Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS. Etter prosjektslutt vil alt datamateriale bli slettet. Universitetet i Stavanger er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Laila B Byberg på mail: lailabbyberg@yahoo.com eller evt telefon 92259654

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg, _____, har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

samtykker til å delta i intervju

Appendix C:

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

“Extensive reading effects in a Second language classroom in Norway”

Kjære lærer,

Bakgrunn og formål

Jeg heter Laila B. Byberg, og er Master in Literacy student ved Universitetet i Stavanger. Jeg inviterer deg til å delta på et kort forskningsprosjekt om effektene metoden ”Extensive Reading” (ER) har på elevers leselyst i ungdomskolen. Hensikten med prosjektet er å få en bedre forståelse av ungdomskole elevers holdninger til lesing i Engelskfaget, og om holdninger endres ved bruk av metoden ER.

Prosjektet er anonymt og det vil ikke bli nevnt verken skole, lærer eller elever til andre. Verken Universitetet i Stavanger, kollegaer eller Masteroppgaven vil gi noe informasjon som kan spores tilbake til skolen og/eller elever. Ditt bidrag vil bli slettet etter avhandlingen.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Læreren vil bli intervjuet. Intervjuet går ut på å kartlegge oppfatninger om elevenes leselyst, og metoder som en har benyttet seg av for å fremme leselyst.

Elevenes deltakelse.

1. Jeg ønsker å dele ut et spørreskjema til elevene hvor jeg får kartlagt litt mer info om elevenes syn på lesing, hvor mye de evt leser etc. Selv om dette gjelder Engelskfaget så er spørreskjema på Norsk da jeg ikke skal måle ferdigheter i Engelsk, men få opplysninger om holdninger. Elevene vil da kunne gi bedre svar og mer utfyllende svar, samt at jeg vil dermed få en bedre innsikt i holdningene.
 2. Elevene velger bøker selv. De kan benytte skolens biblioteket, samt ”Graded Readers” som jeg anskaffer. Elevene skal lese hjemme. De velger selv hvor mange bøker de leser i en periode på 4-5 uker - men de får et skjema som de skal skrive ned hvilke bok de har lest.
 3. etter 4-5 uker får de et spørreskjema igjen som går på leselyst - dette for å se om de har endre syn på lesing når de kan velge bok selv, og de ikke må skrive stil eller har oppgaver linket til boken - og de faktisk syntes at det var gøy å lese.
- Det må hentes inn samtykke fra de elevene som vil delta.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Jeg er underlagt taushetsplikt og ingen andre vil få tilgang til personidentifiserbare opplysninger.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes innen juni 2014, og prosjektet er meldt til Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS. Etter prosjektslutt vil alt datamateriale bli slettet. Universitetet i Stavanger er behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med Laila B Byberg på mail: lailabbyberg@yahoo.com eller evt telefon 92259654

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

samtykker til å delta i intervju

Appendix D

Pre-Interview guide for learners in Norwegian

1. Leser du i fritiden?
 - a) Dersom svaret er ja, hva slags lesestoff leser du?
 - b) Hvorfor leser du akkurat den type lesestoff?
2. Har noen i din familie inspirert deg til å lese?
 - a) Dersom svaret er ja, hvem i din familie?
3. Har en lærer noen gang inspirert deg til å lese?
4. Nevn minst 2 leseaktiviteter fra 1-7 klasse som du husker var gøy?
 - a) Hvorfor tror du at du husker akkurat disse aktivitetene?
 - b) Hva var det som gjorde at det var en gøy leseaktivitet?
5. Hva føler du når læreren hører deg i hjemmelektur eller en oppgave knyttet til teksten du har lest?
 - a) Hvorfor føler du det slik?
6. Hva var det du sist leste på engelsk? Forklar. (Bok, blad, internett, bruksanvisning.)
 - a) Hva likte du mest med det du leste?
7. Liker du å lese på engelsk?
 - a) Forklar hvorfor eller hvorfor ikke:
8. Kunne du tenke deg å lese en ny bok på engelsk, om du fikk velge en bok selv?

9. Hva synes du om å lese engelsk i fritiden?

10. Er det viktig å kunne lese på engelsk?

a) Dersom ja, nevnt hvorfor

Appendix E

Post-Interview guide for learners in Norwegian.

1. Hvilke bøker har du lest i løpet av de siste 4 ukene?
2. Hvorfor valgt du akkurat de bøkene?
 - a) Var boken for kort, lang vanskelig?
3. Var det noen av disse bøkene du ikke fullførte?
 - a) Hvorfor fullførte du dem ikke?
 - b) Hvilke bok syntes du var kjekkest å lese? Forklar hvorfor.
 - c) Hva synes du om den første boken du leste?
4. Har noen i din familie vist interesse for bøkene du har lest de siste 4 ukene?
 - a) Dersom svaret er ja, hvem i din familie?
5. Har en læreren din støttet eller hjulpet deg med valg av bok i løpet av de siste 4 ukene?
 - a) Forklar om hvilke bok, og hvorfor den ble valgt.
6. Hva føler du om å lese nå når læreren IKKE hører deg i hva du har lest og IKKE gav deg en oppgave knyttet til teksten du har lest?
 - a) Hvorfor føler du det slik?
7. Tror du at du har lært noe nytt i løpet av de siste 4 ukene? Forklar.
8. Hva likte du mest med dette lese prosjektet?
9. Hva synes du om å lese engelsk i fritiden?
10. Kunne du tenke deg å lese en ny bok på engelsk, om du fikk velge en bok selv?

Appendix F:

Interview guide - Teacher interview

The aim of this interview is to gain explore learners' teacher views on Norwegian learners' attitudes toward reading in English as a foreign language. A tape recorder is used during this interview, but neither the name of the school or teacher will be revealed. I am interested in teacher's view on learners attitudes toward reading, methods used in teaching English as a second language and which of them seemed beneficial.

1. An article in Stavanger Aftenblad reportet that only one 9th grade class in Stavanger had reached their national goal in reading score. What is your opinion as a teacher on the level of reading in Lower secondary school?
 - a) What about reading skills in English as a second language?

2. *LK06* put a lot of emphasis on reading, and learning objectives for all learners. In a mixed ability class what is your impression of the attitudes towards reading in English?
 - a) What could be a reason/factors for some learners enjoying to read while others struggles?

3. Can teachers promote positive reading attitudes?
 - a) How? Please explain methods you have used:
 - b) Did any of the methods work better on some students than others? If so, which?
 - c) What are the main challenges for a teacher?

4. Did you have any knowledge of Extensive reading prior to this project?
 - a) Do you think a long term focus on ER would be beneficial to your learners?
 - b) What would be the challenges in implementing it?

5. Did any of the learners in this project talk to you about their book or this project?
 - a) In their interview, most of them answered that more reading would be beneficial for them in terms of better knowledge when traveling abroad or when applying for a job, however many of them did not finish their book. Why do you think they see the benefits, but seem careless to achieve it?

6. They also reported that the only reading they did, in both their own language and English was on Facebook, on a Blog, and homework- textbooks. Why do you think this is?

7. Anything you would like to add?